



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES

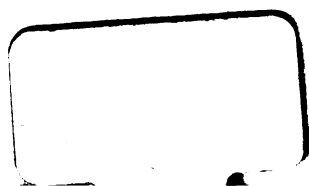


3 3433 07488989 4

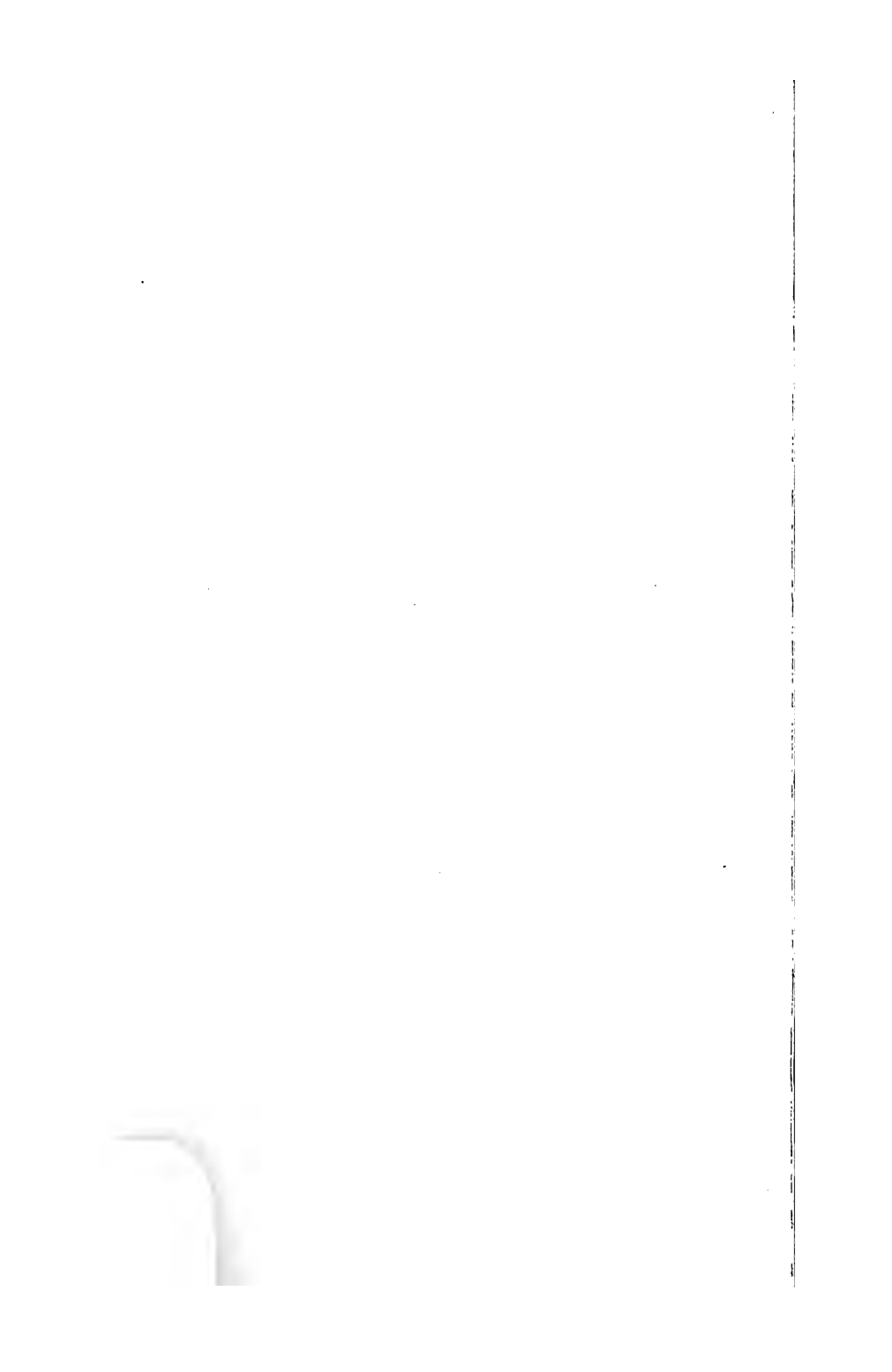
LENOX LIBRARY



Archibald Collection.
Presented in 1878.



*NCLF
Williams





THE
YOUTH
OF
SHAKSPEARE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"SHAKSPEARE AND HIS FRIENDS."

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players,
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.

• SHAKSPEARE.

Triumph, my Britain! thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.

BEN JONSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1839.



PRINTED BY W. WILCOCKSON, ROOM BUILDINGS FETTER LANE

THE YOUTH OF SHAKSPEARE.

CHAPTER I.

O fortune, now my wounds redress,
And help me from my smart,
It cometh well of gentleness,
To ease a mourning heart.

OLD SONG.

Away with these self-loving lads,
Whom Cupid's arrow never glads !
Away poor souls that sigh and weep
In love of those that lie asleep !
For Cupid is a merry god,
And forceth none to kiss the rod.

LORD BROOKE.

These strange and sudden injuries have fallen
So thick upon me, that I lose all sense
Of what they are. Methinks I am not wronged ;
Nor is it aught, if from the censuring world
I can but hide it. Reputation !
Thou art a word, no more.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

ON recovering consciousness, the youthful Shakspeare found himself lying stretched on the grass, with a confused sense of pain and sickness, which prevented him from forming any distinct idea of where he was. He could just discern divers black masses of sundry shapes, moving around and about him, whilst above, myriads of stars were twinkling

upon the surface of the surrounding sky; a thick white haze floated over the grassy earth as far as he could see; and not a sound, save the rustling of the leaves,—which at first came upon his ear with a most unnatural strangeness—could be heard. His earliest perception was that the ground was wet with the dews, and he almost immediately afterwards discovered that his clothes were saturated with the same moisture. This made him make an immediate attempt to rise, whereupon he felt that his limbs were stiff and aching. Sitting, supporting himself by one arm, he strove to ascertain where he was; but every thing upon which he turned his eyes floated in such shadowy outline he could distinguish nothing; and so fearful a pain was in his head, he was forced to lean it upon his hand as he rested his elbow on his lap. He then found his brows covered with a clammy moisture, which stuck to his palm with a peculiar unpleasantness, and an overpowering sense of sickness prevented him from attempting to regain his feet. In this position, and with these sensations, he remained for some time.

Nature appeared, in the rising dews beneath her starry canopy, like to some mighty empress lying in her shroud under a jewelled pall; but this awful magnificence was now lost upon him, who at any other time would have seen and felt it more thoroughly than could any other. In his present state she might have put on herself her proudest

apparelling, and he would have paid no more heed to it than if he had had no foreknowledge of her visible existence; and for the time being, in his comprehension not only all this glorious garnishing in which he had oft taken such exquisite delight, was utterly done away with, but that absolute and unrivalled Beauty, whose infinite attractions so set off, had bound his spirit to her will, seemed to have suffered a perfect dissolution into the elements from which she sprung; and had at once become a darkness—a chaos—and a nothing. This, however, as must be manifest to all, was mere fantasy. The chaos lay in the mind, and not in Nature; who, however funereally she may choose to array herself, hath a perpetual life, that cannot be made the property either of Time or of Death. All the singular fine faculties and curious conceptions of the young student, in the state of half-consciousness in which he now existed, were as if they had never been; and in intelligence—alack that there should be so humiliating a truth,—a sudden visitation of physical pain had reduced the promising scholar below the level of the most unlettered hind.

At last he managed to raise himself upon his feet, and leaned against the trunk of a tree close by which he had fallen. He looked around, and it appeared as though every thing wore an unfamiliar and unfriendly countenance; helpless and faint with pain, he turned his appealing gaze to those fair ministers

on high, who, at such numberless occasions, had looked down so invitingly on his meditations; but they seemed at this present to regard him with a cold indifference which struck a chill to his heart. He felt weaker and weaker every moment; the mists appeared to be thickening around him so that he could scarce breathe; the tree passed away from his touch; the ground slipped from under his feet; and with a look of anguish that was a most deep reproach unto Nature for having so abandoned him in his extremity, he again fell out of all sign of existence.

At this moment lights were seen in the distance, and a confused shouting of men and barking of dogs was plainly audible. Amid this the name of Mabel might be distinguished, called out by several different voices, and other cries, which proved that the party were in search of the poor foundling.

"Mabel!" shouted Sir Thomas Lucy, some yards off, as loud as he could for the wrapper his careful dame had put round his throat to protect him from the damp mist. "Murrain on the wench, what hath become of her I wonder?"

"Hoy!" bawled out a stout old game-keeper for the space of nigh half a minute, carrying of a lanthorn, which great cry of his brought on such a fit of coughing there seemed to be no end of it.

"Prythee when we return, good Sampson, ask some of my julep of me," said Dame Lucy, who prided herself hugely on her skill in medicaments,

and was ever as anxious to lay hold of a patient as was any 'pothecary in the land; "'tis famous for the cure of all manner of coughs, asthmatics, quinsies, colds, hoarseness, and other diseases of the like sort,—so if thou wilt take it steadily it cannot help to be a sovereign remedy for thy asthma."

"Ay, mistress, an' it please you," replied Sampson, although he knew full well the virtues of that same julep, having had it put upon him for a good score years, let him have whatever complaint he might.

"A fig for such villainous stuff!" exclaimed Sir Thomas; "I'll cure thy asthmatics, I'll warrant! When I was at college, I was as famous for my studies in medicine as was any physician of them all. Indeed, I got me the name of little Esculapius, I had acquired such great cunning in it. There was no such cures ever heard of as I have made. But it led me so into the playing of tricks, that I was obliged to give it up, or I should have been expelled for my many mischiefs. Oh, the love powders I have made that distressed damsels came to me for! Oh, the wonderful charmed philtres, and magical elixirs, I have given them for bringing back their stray lovers. By cock and pye, I tickled them so with my stuff, that if a man of any kind, whatever he might lack in handsomeness, did but shew himself in the High Street, women of all ages, sorts, and conditions, rushed from every house with a

monstrous uncontrollable eagerness, intent upon the having him whether he would or no."

"By'r lady, I never heard this before, Sir Thomas!" cried his dame, in some surprise, yet in the fullest conviction, here was another wonderful proof of her husband's extraordinary rare wisdom. "Believe me, had I known of it, I would have asked your advice numberless times when I have not."

"Mabel!" shouted the knight again, and again Sampson set up a prolonged cry, and half choked himself in the midst of it, and two dogs they had with them recommenced barking, as if they thought their voices stood as good a chance of being recognised by their kind friend, the poor foundling, as any.

"Plague on't!" exclaimed Sir Thomas; "I am nigh hoarse with bawling; and despite of our mufflers and other covering, I doubt not we shall have terrible colds from wandering about here when the dew is so thick."

"Ay, Master Justice," observed the game-keeper, scarce ceasing one minute to give evidence this coming out agreed not with his asthma.

"I marvel she should serve us this way," added the knight, after another call from him, another broken-winded cry from his man, and another famous howl from the two dogs, with as little success as had attended them all along; "I hope no harm hath come to her."

"By my troth a thought strikes me!" cried Dame Lucy, suddenly coming to a full stop in her walk, to the exceeding astonishment of the justice and his man.

"Marry, I hope 'twill strike thee hard enough to tell us what 'tis about, dame," said her husband, merrily.

"Doubtless that pestilent fine fellow hath run away with her," added she, as if horror-struck at the idea.

"Ey, who? What fine fellow?" exclaimed the knight, rapidly; "run away with a servant of a justice o' the peace! 'Slight! 'tis as heinous a matter as sheep-stealing! But who's the villain? 'Fore George; if he be a low person, he shall swing for't; and if he be one of any sort of quality, I'll make a star-chamber matter on't. I will be no rearer of coneys for other men's catching, I promise you." And thereupon he thumped the ground with the end of his stick a most determined blow.

"Nay, good heart, be not in so deadly a passion," cried the good dame, earnestly.

"Passion!" bawled the justice, in a louder voice, and seemingly in an increased rage. "Wounds! but methinks here is fine occasion for it. It is but fitting I should be in a passion—in a horrible, tearing passion, at such a villainous affront as this. O' my life, I should be monstrous glad now to do some deadly mischief." And at this he pulled his

rapier a little out of the sheath, and then sent it back with a whang that sounded fearfully to his alarmed wife, and astonished game-keeper.

"I pray you, take not on so murderously, Sir Thomas," cried the good dame.

"Valour o' me! tell me this caitiff on the instant!" exclaimed the knight, in a voice that appeared to admit of no dallying.

"He was one of those who made themselves so busy with Mabel whilst we were at Kenilworth," replied the old lady, tremblingly; "but he cannot be a fit object for the receiving of your just indignation."

"Ha! Is it so?" cried Sir Thomas, in no way abating the terribleness of his anger. "O' my word, I did suspect them of no good. 'Twas a trick I'll wager my life on't—a cozening trick to get them into my good-will; but I go not so easily into a trap, I promise you. I saw the bait, and did imagine the mischief on the instant. How dost feel so certain one of them hath carried off our Mabel?" asked he, and at this the good dame up and told, how one day she was walking with Mabel in the park, and they were accosted by these same fine fellows with a marvellous show of delicate behaviour; but she, giving them instant proof she was not to be deceived by their craftiness, they departed from her presence with more speed than they had come in it. Then the knight became more brave

in his speech than ever, and was talking very largely how he would have driven them both out of his grounds at the very point of his rapier, had he been in her company at that time, when his attention was suddenly diverted from the subject in hand, by a strange barking of the dogs a little in advance of them. Sampson made haste to the spot, with his lantern to see what it meant.

"Perchance the dogs have found her," observed Dame Lucy; "and it may be she hath been taken with a fit, or sudden swooning, and so could get no further."

"Murder!" cried Sampson as loud as he could, upon catching a glance, by aid of the light he carried, of what appeared to be a dead body.

"Oh, the poor wench!" exclaimed the good dame in very doleful accents.

"What dost say, knave?" inquired the knight, in somewhat of a trepidation.

"Here's a horrid mangle!" bawled the serving-man, gazing with real terror on the blood-stained face of the youthful Shakspeare.

"Thou shalt not go, Sir Thomas!" cried his dame in a nervous apprehension, clinging tightly to his arm. "Perchance the murderers may not be far away. Keep down thy valour, dear heart, I prythee! Nay, sweet life, thou shalt go on no account! Thy brave spirit will lead thee to some hurt; thou hast no occasion to be so exceeding

valiant. Remember, chuck! thou art getting to be old, and no fit match for I know not how many monstrous horrible cut-throat villains who may be lurking about."

"Shall a justice o' the peace stand playing of mumchance, when murder stalks abroad?" exclaimed Sir Thomas, who, believing that the supposed villains must by this have got them to some place of safety, had drawn his rapier, and was advancing with a marvellous shew of resolution as fast as Dame Lucy would allow him. "Must Sir Thomas Lucy, knight of the shire, and late sheriff of the county, hide his valour, when deadly mischief is a doing on his own land? Dame! dame! I will not be hindered; I feel as full of fight as a drawn badger; my valour must spend itself. Where are the monstrous pitiful caitiffs that have done this mischief? 'Fore George! I will slay them every man!"

"Hodge! Anthony! David!" cried his dame urgently to divers of the serving-men and keepers who were at a little distance behind. "Help me hold thy master. Here is a foul murder done upon poor Mabel, and he is so moved, he must needs be attacking of all the murderers at once." The men came up in wonderful tribulation at hearing of the fate of the gentle foundling; and with pressing entreaties to their master he would not wilfully seek his own death. They sought to hold

him fast; but the more he was held, the more boldly he threatened. At last they all arrived at the spot where Sampson and the dogs were examining with extreme curiousness the body of our young scholar.

"Ha! how is this?" exclaimed the knight in exceeding astonishment, as soon as he beheld the young Shakspeare, by the aid of the lanterns. "This it no Mabel; this is some boy or another."

"I warrant you, master," observed one of the men gladly, "our Mabel hath darker hair."

"And she wore not jerkins of any kind," said another.

"Nor trunks, that ever I saw," added a third.

"'Tis not our Mabel, out of all doubt!" cried Dame Lucy, gazing upon the motionless body with mingled feelings of awe and curiousness. "I never gave her to wear any such clothes as these; and such as she had of me for her apparelling were honest gowns of a sober colour, with petticoats of a proper stuff, blue hose, and shoes of a fair strength, with a round hat, for every day; and then for Sundays——"

"Gog's wounds!—he lives, master!" hurriedly exclaimed Sampson, who had lifted up the head of the supposed corpse, and feeling him move, could not forbear crying out—the which completely put a stop to the dame's account of her handmaid's wardrobe.

"Mass! he breathes, sure enough," observed Hodge; "and that, as I have been told, be an excellent sign of life."

"Nay, as I live, he openeth his eyes!" cried Anthony.

"And now he be a moving of his fingers!" added David with a like marvelling; and then all watched with a famous interest the symptoms of returning consciousness in the wounded youth. The justice was somewhat puzzled what to do in so strange a case. Here was a murdered person coming to life, and no sign of Mabel was to be seen any where. He thought it was exceeding suspicious; and then, believing he had given sufficient evidence of his valiant spirit, he sheathed his rapier, took his stick from one of the men who had picked it up on coming along, and leaning on it, kept considering how he should behave. In the meanwhile, William Shakspeare, with all the lanterns bearing upon his face, was looking upon those around him, greatly bewildered, yet beginning to have some confused ideas of where he was, and what brought him there. Nevertheless, the faces, as far as he could distinguish, were unfamiliar to him. He felt weak, and ever and anon gave a strong shudder, as though his blood was chilled by so long lying in the dew and the night air.

"Methinks he hath on him something of an ague," observed Dame Lucy. "Could we get

him home with us, now, some of my julep would do him famous good service, I warrant you."

"Humph!" cried Sir Thomas, gazing upon the stranger with a terrible penetrating look, upon hearing of this hint of the good dame, backed by assurances of its efficacy from each of the serving-men.

"An' it please you, sweet lady," said the youthful Shakspeare, faintly addressing Dame Lucy, emboldened to it by the evidence he had just heard of her considerateness for him, "I beseech you tell me, am I not still in the park of his good worship, Sir Thomas Lucy?"

"That are you, beyond all question," replied she very courteously, for she was well pleased with the civilness with which the question had been put to her.

"Ay, you be just upon the very middle of Fairmead Grove, my young master," added one of the men.

"I thought I could not help being at the same place," observed the youth.

"But how didst come to that place, and what dost do at that place at so late an hour?" asked the justice, in a style that savoured wondrously of a disposition in him to doubt the honesty of the person he questioned. Thereupon William Shakspeare without acquainting any with the reason of his visit to the park, told the knight how he had

been a witness to the carrying off of Mabel by two villains, and how when striving to stop one, he was felled to the earth by the other.

"So!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, looking with more severity than ever, "Thou hast got a fine story; but I doubt t'will do thee any good at assize." Just as the knight had uttered this, the youth gave a sudden start upon noting for the first time his hands were covered with blood, which discovery, and the manner of his behaviour at that moment, was well observed by the justice. "Ha!" cried he, "How didst get thyself so dabbled?—Dost tell that cozening tale to me when thy hands and face bear evidence thou hast murdered our Mabel!"

"Murdered her!" exclaimed William, in extreme astonishment. "Believe me I would much rather have died in her rescue."

"I believe thee fellow!" cried the justice, with extreme emphasis. "O' my life I do, believe thee to be a most notorious horrible villain! But how didst get thyself in so suspicious a way? answer me that. The truth, fellow, the truth."

"As for what I see on my hand," observed the youth, "I am as much surprised at it as yourself can be; but on reflection, methinks 'tis easy to be accounted for."

"Is't indeed?" replied the knight. "Marry, I doubt it hugely."

"Doubtless the blow I received hath made a

wound," continued the other. "And holding my aching head awhile, hath brought my hand to the state you see."

"Heart o' me ! here be a wound indeed, Master," cried Sampson, closely examining the head of the suspected person by the aid of his lantern.

"By'r lady, and so there is !" added Dame Lucy. "I would he were where I could apply to it some of my famous julep ; 'tis the sovereignest thing on earth for a green wound."

With the friendly assistance of the serving men, with whom there was not a doubt remaining of his perfect innocence, William Shakspeare stood upon his feet, and presently missed the book he had been studying before he fell asleep under the tree. The justice somewhat perplexed in his notions, stood regarding him with a most scrutinizing look.

"What dost want looking about so !" enquired he.

"A book, an' it please your worship," answered the other. "A book of sweet poems I was intent upon studying, before I beheld her you called Mabel being carried away, screaming in the arms of a villain."

"I did kick my foot against something not a moment since," said Dame Lucy ; "perchance that may be it." Hearing this the serving men and keepers looked carefully about with their lanterns.

"Thou saidst nought about her screaming just now," observed the justice sternly, upon whom this

addition came with a very marvellous suspiciousness. "But tell us who thou art—thy name, fellow, thy name?"

"My name is William Shakspeare," answered the youth.

"What, John Shakspeare's son of Stratford?" asked Sir Thomas quickly.

"The same, an' it please your worship."

"Then 'tis clear—'tis manifest—'tis most absolute and undeniable, fellow!" exclaimed the justice, with a severity greater than all he had yet shewn.

"Mass, I thought I could not suspect thee without warrantable assurance. Thy name proves it. If thou hast not committed this foul murder I will be sworn an ass all the rest of my days. Thou hast a most discreditable name, fellow. I know not a name of such ill repute that can be found any where. 'Tis a bad name; and being a bad name must needs be an ill name; and being an ill name cannot help being a name that a man shall chance to go to the hangman with."

"Here's the book sure enough," cried one of the serving men.

"Book me no books," said the knight sharply, whose remembrance of what had been told him by Master Buzzard, made him careless of this new proof of the youth's innocence. "Take him away! I will look into this matter with more strictness. God's precious, so notorious a name no man ever

had! But let me examine this same book of which he hath spoken so confidently." Having got it in his hand, the justice had a lantern held to him and scrutinised it very narrowly.

"Ha! O' my life I thought as much!" added he, looking from the book to the supposed murderer. "Thou hast stolen it. Here is in it the name of Sir Marmaduke de Largesse."

"He lent it me, as he hath done many others," replied William Shakspeare.

"*He* lend thee, fellow!" cried the knight disdainfully. "A person of his quality lend books to so horrible low a person as the son of John Shakspeare. How dost dare put so impudent an assertion on a justice o' the peace! Mass, 'tis manifest thou art a most thorough villain by thy name—'tis as clear thou hast stolen this book, and doubtless many others by thy professions—and there is no doubt thou hast done a foul murder by thy being in the neighbourhood at the time the wench was missing, and found here under such suspicious circumstances. Bring him along, Sampson! Thou art my close prisoner. I charge thee escape on thy peril."

Our young student, to his exceeding astonishment, found himself taken into custody; but to be accused of destroying that exquisite fair creature who had so long been the exclusive subject of his sweetest meditations, appeared to him so un-

natural a thing, he could scarce believe it possible it could be thought of, for a single moment. Confused as he was by the effects of the blow, and still more bewildered by the behaviour of Sir Thomas Lucy, his apprehensions for the safety of the gentle Mabel, completely thrust aside every thing like fear for himself, and all the way to the house he did nothing but think of the possible dangers she might be exposed to in the hands of those desperate villains he had beheld carrying of her off. When he arrived at the mansion, he was led up stairs into a room where there was no possibility of escaping; and Dame Lucy presently came and washed his wound, applied to it some of her famous julep, and put on it a clean bandage, for although, as a wife, she would not for a moment doubt of the correctness of her husband's opinion, she could not allow such an opinion, bad as it was, to interfere with the wounded youth's receiving the advantage of her skill in remedies.

It was a small chamber, with a standing bed in it, whereon was a fair coverlet of the dame's needle work. A little table, with materials for washing, stood close at hand, which had evidently been in use; and beside them were sundry towel, spieces of cloth for bandage, bottles, scissors, and the like necessary sort of things for the dressing of a wound. The dame sat, with a famous serious aspect, in an arm chair, at the side of the table, fastening the

bandage on the head of her patient, who knelt down at her feet. Close by the suspected murderer, holding a candle, stood a comely little danisel, whose bright eyes had gradually lost that fearfulness with which she at first regarded the wicked wretch she had been told he was.

Watching these, at a little distance, stood two simple looking fellows—the one with a long sheepish face, surrounded with straggling lanky locks, which was Hodge; and the other, with a head as round as an apple, of which the countenance was well marked out of all contradiction, for it would have rivalled any old buckler in the number of dents it had; and he was David. Each was leaning on a formidable looking harquebus, and beside which they were armed with sword and dagger.

“Dost feel any more comfort now?” enquired the good dame, as her patient stood up before her, immediately the dressing of his wound was finished.

“Wonderful, I thank you very heartily,” exclaimed the youth, leaning of himself against a chair—for he felt exceeding weak.

“I’m glad on’t,” added his physician, carefully pouring into a cup some of her famous julep; then giving the bottle to the black-eyed Kate, with an injunction to be mindful and put it down safely, she offered the cup and its contents to her patient. “Drink this, I prythee,” said she, “and be assured ’twill do thee as much efficacy taken as an inward

medicine, as thou hast already found when used as a lotion for a wound." William Shakspeare again thanked her with a like sincerity, and cheerfully swallowed the draught to the last drop. His behaviour had already pleased her, and the alacrity with which he drank what she had given him, delighted her still more. She rose from her seat, ordering the handmaid to clear the table, and get a bowl of milk and a manchets for the youth's supper; and then telling the two men Sir Thomas desired they left not the room on any account, nor once took their eyes off of their prisoner, she seemed as if about to take her departure. Yet still she lingered.

"I marvel thou dost not confess thy wickedness," said she, at last, to her young patient, manifestly more in sorrow than in anger. "Prythee say what thou hast done with the body; for methinks the least thou canst do is to let her have Christian burial."

"Whose body, dear lady?" enquired he.

"Why, poor Mabel, whom thou hast so foully murdered," answered the dame. "Alack! 'tis a grievous thing one so young—and so well behaved too—should do so horrible a thing." Kate stood still a moment, and regarded the suspected murderer with a wonderful searching glance.

"I beseech you, think of me not so vilely!" exclaimed the youthful Shakspeare, with great earnestness. "By all things most sacred, I do assure

you, I got this blow in endeavouring to stay the villains who carried her off." Kate returned to her work with a look of infinite satisfaction.

"Didst not hear what Sir Thomas said?" enquired the old lady, very gravely; "and dost really imagine that one of thy years can know better of a thing than a justice o' the peace, and a knight o' the shire, who owneth lands in five counties?" Thereupon the good dame shook her head with a wonderful solemnity, and walked, in her stateliest manner, out of the chamber.

"Prythee, Kate, bring us a jug of small ale!" exclaimed the man with the indented face, as he threw himself into a chair, directly his mistress had closed the door. "I'm horrible thirsty after all this fruitless searching for poor Mabel."

"Body o' me, so am I, David!" said he with the sheepish countenance, following the other's example. "I feel as though I had lived on pickled herrings for a whole month of fast days, I be so uncommon dry. Come, Kate, bring us a tankard."

"Wait till thy betters be served, Hodge," replied the girl, quickly. David looked hard at Hodge, and Hodge looked hard at David; and then both looked very hard at their prisoner.

"I pray you, good sir, to seat yourself," said Kate to the latter, who still stood leaning against the back of a chair, looking faint and pale; and thereupon she moved the chair round for him, convenient for

his sitting. "Methinks you must want rest exceedingly."

"I thank you," replied he, taking her proffered kindness very courteously; "I am indeed somewhat weary."

"O' my life I am monstrous sorry," observed she, regarding him with an evident sympathy; "but I will make what speed I can with your supper, so that you shall to bed quickly and get you a good sleep, for which I doubt not you shall be much the better."

"I have no stomach for anything, I thank you all the same," said the patient faintly.

"Nay, but you go not to bed supperless, I promise you," exclaimed Kate, with one of her pleasantest smiles; "such light victual must needs be what would do you most good; and I will take care it shall be greatly to your liking." As soon as she had left the room Hodge again looked at David and David looked at Hodge, and both looked at their prisoner harder than before. After which the former laid his piece carefully on his lap, and the other did the same immediately; then he of the well-marked countenance, stooped forward, poking out his chin and his lips towards his companion, making a sort of half-stifled whistling, and the owner of the sheep-face lost no time in following his example.

"I beseech you tell me," said William Shakspeare, "if there exists any evidence other than

what I have stated for supposing the gentle Mabel hath come to any hurt?" At hearing of this question the two men looked at each other a little harder, and whistled a little louder than they had previously done.

"I would gladly hear any intelligence of her safety," added he, upon finding he got no answer; but these words merely produced an accompaniment to the whistling in the shape of the drumming of three fingers of each of his guard upon the table before them. Observing they did not choose to speak, he desisted of his questions till the entrance of the pretty handmaid with his supper, of whom he enquired in a like manner, telling her also he could get no answer of any kind from the persons she had left with him.

"Why so churlish, I prythee!" exclaimed Kate, as she placed close to the wounded youth a bowl of hot milk spiced with nutmeg and cinnamon, and a fair white loaf, knife and spoon, on a tray covered with a cloth that seemed to rival the milk in whiteness. "Methinks 'twill do you no great harm to open your mouths a bit, the which you are ready enough to do over a full trencher."

"The justice hath commanded that we have no communications with the prisoner," observed David with extreme seriousness.

"And moreover hath desired that we speak to him at our peril," added Hodge.

"A fig's end for the justice!" cried their pretty companion, to the infinite astonishment of the serving men; "art so weak of conceit as to suspect this good youth of so improbable a thing as the killing of our Mabel? Why thou hast no more brains than a blighted apple." Then turning to the supposed murderer with an increased kindness of manner, assured him that nothing was known concerning of the missing person but what he had himself told, and pressed him urgently to partake of what she had brought, so that he could not refuse; and when she had again taken herself out of the room David and Hodge looked at each other and then at their prisoner so terrible hard their eyes must have ached for some minutes after. William Shakspeare took no notice of them, although they were watching of him narrowly. All at once the two men snatched up their harquebusses as if they would have them in readiness for immediate use, and put all the valour they possessed into their looks. They had observed he had taken a knife into his hand, as they thought with no other purpose than to stab them and then make his escape; but he merely used it for the cutting of a slice off the loaf to sop in his milk. This did not assure them. They kept their gaze on his every motion with extreme seriousness, save when he happened by chance to raise his eyes from the supper he was languidly tasting, when on a sudden they would be diligently

examining one or other of their legs they were swinging to and fro on the chair, with as complete a carelessness as if they were thinking of nothing.

Presently Kate returned again, bearing a brimming tankard, which she put down between the two serving men.

"I doubt hugely thou dost deserve anything of the sort," said she to them; "thou showest such uncivil behaviour towards this good youth. I would wager my life on't he knoweth no more of murder than a child unborn."

"But his worship declareth he *doth* know of it, Kate," observed David with more than ordinary solemnness.

"And moreover hath determined 'twas done by this person and no other," added Hodge after the like fashion.

"I care not for fifty worships," replied she, flashing her dark eyes very prettily; "or for what they say, or for what they do, when they shew such marvellous injustice. Is't reasonable—is't natural—is't credible, one of his years, with a countenance too as innocent as is a lambkin—should take to such villainous courses? Why, what shallow-witted poor creatures must they be who would entertain such intolerable notions."

The rough-featured serving man, as she turned her back to approach the prisoner, shook his head with a very wonderful solemnity; and then, not

knowing what better to be at, put his mouth to the tankard, and whilst he drank kept his watchful eyes squinting over the rim in the direction of the supposed murderer. After a time had elapsed, which his companion thought was considerable longer than it ought to have been, he handed his sheep-faced companion the tankard, wiping of his mouth with the cuff of his jerkin at the same moment, and looking such volumes of hidden meaning as it is utterly impossible to express, to which the other responded by giving a hasty glance at the roof, and then a prodigious long one into the tankard, to which his jaws appeared to be fixed with such firmness there was no getting of them apart.

"Now a fair good night to you;" exclaimed the smiling little creature finding, with all her kind persuading, she could not get him to eat more of his supper. "You can to bed as soon as you have a mind; and I hope you will enjoy an excellent sweet rest. Good night," repeated she, and gave with it so soft a glance as if she intended to have subdued all the manhood in his nature.

"Good night!" replied William Shakspeare earnestly; "and a million of thanks for your great kindness."

Directly Kate had departed, David threw himself back in the chair in the fullest conviction, from what he had observed, that she entertained a design for the prisoner's escape; and doubtless the same con-

clusions were come at by Hodge, for he put on his countenance much the same sort of expression, and, seeing the supposed murderer rising from his seat, both his guards grasped their arms firmly on the instant, and started to their feet, manifestly suspecting he was about to rush upon them. This movement of his, however, was merely made for the purpose of throwing himself on the bed, which he soon did with his clothes on, for with a delicacy suitable to his years, he liked not undressing of himself before strangers. In truth, he was thoroughly exhausted by pain, anxiety, and weariness, and in a few minutes was in as deep a sleep as ever he had enjoyed in his whole life.

The two serving men had returned to their seats. Both gazed upon the young student, and then at each other, as if they had huge doubts he had any intention of sleeping. In a short time all was as silent you might have heard a pin drop, which silence seemed exceeding irksome to the guard. Each looked to see his weapons were in good order.—each snuffed the candle—and each buried his nose in the tankard; but the prisoner remained motionless, and the silence grew all the greater. It was evident from a number of fidgetty ways they were continually exhibiting, that they could not long remain without some talking.

“Methinks Sampson’s niece groweth horribly bold, Hodge;” observed David at last in a low voice.

"Ay, that does she," answered Hodge in a whisper. "I never heard of such extreme impudency in any wench."

"Heart o' me!" said the other; "I did myself hear her cry out, 'a fig for the justice!' which seemeth to me to smack abominably of a wilful rebelling against those in authority."

"Ay, David," added his companion; "and as I remember, she had the infamousness to assert she cared not for fifty worships."

"My hair stood on end at hearing it," said David. "But I doubt not 'twill bring down on her some awful judgment."

"It cannot help doing so," replied Hodge.

"Nevertheless, we must not say aught against her of what we have heard," observed he of the marks. "For she hath some lusty fellows of her acquaintance, who, perchance, might not take it civil of us."

"Ah, that she hath!" quoth the sheepish looking one, with a famous seriousness. "One of whom broke my head at the last May games, because I laughed when she slipped down, and shewed somewhat more of her ankle than is customary."

"At least, we will take good heed she shall not assist the prisoner to escape;" observed David.

"I warrant you," said Hodge. Again there was so dead a silence it seemed to make their flesh creep; and they looked on the sleeping youth in

such a manner as proved they would have liked any other company. They turned over in their minds the possibility of his suddenly rising and making some desperate effort at their destruction, with the expectation of saving his own life by it; and the more they thought of it, the more convinced were they it would be done ere they could be aware. This state of apprehension at last became insupportable, and both made a movement at the same moment to turn their attention to another matter. David raised the tankard to his mouth to drown his fears in a full draught; and Hodge snatched up the snuffers desperately intent on lessening the wick of the candle, which he had been screwing up his courage to do for the last half hour. Alack, the trepidation he was in caused him to snuff it out; and then they were in total darkness. To be in company with an unfettered murderer was bad enough of all conscience, but to be left in the dark with him was more than mortal courage would allow of. David trembled so he could not hold the tankard, so down it went, and the noise it made so frightened him and his associate, that they dropped their harquebusses, and making for the door, rushed down stairs at the top of their speed, crying out, "murder!" as loud as they could bawl.

About five minutes afterwards a most formidable armament composed of every male in the house

armed to the teeth, some half dressed, and here and there a nightcap to shew they had been disturbed from their sleep, crept cautiously up the stairs. They gained the landing—the justice having placed himself in the centre of his household, in a night-gown and slippers, a velvet cap on his head, a drawn sword in one hand, and a pistol in the other. Before him were Sampson the gamekeeper and two of his sons—all stout fellows, in forester's frocks, carrying loaded pieces—then came Anthony, David, and Hodge with drawn rapiers—the knight next, and after him the grooms and scullions with lights in one hand and some goodly weapon in the other. Besides which, from open doors were seen divers of the women in their night dress, taking a peep at what was going on, with a scarce repressible inclination for a good scream. When the men got near the door, upon David and Hodge reminding them that the murderer had with him two loaded harquebusses, no one seemed inclined to go in before his fellows.

“How know you not he may be this very moment behind the door,” said David in a terrible frightened way, that carried conviction to most of his hearers. “Nay, I do believe I hear him now levelling of his piece!” This occasioned a sudden backing of the armed party, and a famous scream from the women. The knight said nothing—for an indisputable reason—he had nothing to say—

but he felt that had he known the murderer had been so terrible a fellow, he would have been hanged ere he would have meddled with him. The dispute among the leaders still raged high. Every one seemed desirous of giving his neighbour the honour of going first; but not one of all that body but modestly declined having to do with any such greatness. At last the argument was put a stop to by the sudden appearance of Kate with a lighted candle in her hand.

“What dost want, Kate?”

“What dost want, Uncle?” was said at the same moment by the stout Sampson and his pretty neice.

“The murderer is seeking to escape us;” replied Anthony.

“Prythee get thee hence, or thou wilt be shot,” exclaimed one of her cousins.

“I marvel there should be such foolishness!” observed Kate; and the next moment, to the infinite horror and astonishment of the whole party, walked deliberately into the formidable chamber.

“I prythee come here, uncle Sampson, if thou has not lost thy wits as completely as the rest,” added she from the interior. “Thou shalt see a sight as little akin to violence as can be seen any where.” Sampson crept cautiously—his sons followed their father with the like heed—the serving men trod in the steps of the gamekeepers, Sir Thomas Lucy and the rest of his dependants,

half curiousness and fear, pushed forward in the like direction, and the women with what they had hastily put on, came to take a peep where they could. To the great marvelling of all, there lay the supposed murderer as fast asleep as ever he could be; and there lay the broken tankard; and there lay the fallen harquebusses. Now who was so valorous as the justice; he seemed as though he would have cut his cowardly serving-men into ribbons for having woke up the whole household with so fabulous a tale as they had told of the sudden and outrageous attack upon them of their prisoner; however, he contented himself with ordering them to stay where they were and keep better watch; and then he, with the rest, presently retraced their steps to their several beds.

In the morning William Shakspeare woke up, marvellously refreshed by his night's rest, and the first objects that met his sight were his guards sound asleep, snoring loud enough to wake anybody. Inconcieveable was the consternation of David and Hodge, upon opening their eyes, to find so dreadful a person close upon them, but taking of them no more heed than if they had been a couple of drowned puppies left in a dry pond. Each cautiously sought to gain possession of his fire-arms, which stood at a little distance from them upon neighbouring chairs, and to their great joy this they succeeded in doing. Our young student,

in his turn, was in a considerable astonishment, when, upon turning round, with his face dripping with water, to get to the towel, he encountered the fixed fearful gaze of his guards, whom a moment since he had beheld in so perfect a state of somnolency. He could not avoid standing looking at them for a few moments, there was so strange an expression in their countenances; and they gazed as though he had such power in his eyes they could not turn their own aside. However, directly he went to the towel, and was rubbing himself with it, the two stared at each other more intently than they had ever done.

He had just got himself in his cleanest trim, and feeling wonderfully comfortable, when his pretty little friend, the gamekeeper's niece, made her appearance with his breakfast, in a kinder mood than ever; and he was sufficiently improved to do justice to her catering, even had it not been garnished with such winning entreaties and smiling looks as accompanied it. He had scarce made a finish of his meal when Dame Lucy entered, bottle in hand, and finding him so much better, she again washed his wound with her infallible julep, and then made him swallow a cup of the same, with a very visible satisfaction, especially when he gratefully ascribed his better health to her wonderful medicine. The old dame could not forbear sighing at the thought of losing so goodly a patient, and in her own mind

thought it monstrous pitiful one so tractable in the taking of medicine, should be turned over to so disreputable a physician as the hangman.

About an hour after this, closely escorted by his guards, the prisoner entered the justice's room. Sir Thomas sat in a high-backed cushioned chair, with a screen at his back to keep off the wind, and a table before him to hold such papers, books, and utensils of writing as he needed. Jemmy Catchpole sat at the end of the table mending of a pen, for he was sure to be sent for on all knotty cases, to advise with the justice, and see that the law was properly administered. There were several persons—farmers and yeomen they looked to be—sitting on a long settle at the farther end of the chamber, perchance on some business with his worship, gnawing their sticks, fiddling their hats, and staring about them, as men do who are kept waiting in a strange place, when they would rather be elsewhere. Sampson, the stout gamekeeper, and his two stout sons, with Anthony, a bull-headed, pig's-eyed serving man, having remarkable thin legs, very much after the fashion of a pair of nut-crackers, and two or three stupid blubberly fellows of clowns, carrying staves in token of their being constables, stood in a half circle at a yard or so from the table. The justice leaned back in his chair, looking awfully solemn at Jemmy Catchpole, the lawyer leaned forward on his stool, gazing with equal solemnity

at his worship; and the constables, gamekeepers, and serving men, stared from the ground to the ceiling and from the ceiling to the ground, with a solemnness more awful than either. This was the moment of the prisoner's appearance.

"Call William Shakspeare!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, as soon as he noticed that there was no occasion to do anything of the sort.

"Call William Shakspeare," repeated the lawyer to one of the constables.

"Will'm Shuk—spur!" hoarsely bawled out a short, thick, bandy-legged man, with a face that would have outblushed a poppy. The youth was just before him, and answered readily to his name.

"William Shakspeare!" said the justice, in his gravest voice; "you are brought before me, her Majesty's justice o' the peace, on a charge—that is to say, you are here before me accused of—yes, accused of and charged with—charged with divers horrible offences—that is to say, criminally charged with, or I might say, accused of, all manner of misdemeanours, and with perpetrating and committing divers horrible offences against the peace of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth; whereof the first against you is no less a crime than to be accused of, or otherwise charged with, the horrible offence of stealing—against the peace of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth, as aforesaid."

Having made so imposing a display of his judicial

oratory, his worship cried out—"Call Anthony Gosling!" Jemmy Catchpole repeated the command to the hoarse man with the bandy legs.

"Ant'ny Gos—lin!" bawled the constable.

"Here!" replied a voice from the bull-headed serving man, and the thin legs made two steps out of the half circle towards the table.

"Swear him!" exclaimed the justice, and the lawyer, laying hold of a little book, mumbled a few sentences in a quick low tone, at the conclusion of which Anthony made a bob with his head towards the book, and then held up his head again very stiff, and looked very desperate. Just as this was done, an interruption appeared in the person of the pretty gamekeeper's niece, who presented a letter to the justice, the sight of which set him making of another famous speech, accusing the prisoner of stealing sundry books belonging to Sir Marmaduke de Largesse; and then putting forth the letter as one just received from Sir Marmaduke in answer to a communication sent that morning by himself, concerning of the charges against William Shakspeare, he bade Jemmy Catchpole read it, as it doubtless contained decisive evidence of the prisoner's guilt. Jemmy Catchpole read it very carefully, and the farther he read the more astonished was the justice, for it not only contained a clear acknowledgement that the book had been lent by the writer to the prisoner, but spoke in the highest terms of eulogy

of this identical William Shakspeare as a youth of admirable character, whom he had long known and respected, and begging Sir Thomas Lucy, as a particular favour, to treat that person honourably, to let him retain the book which he had falsely been accused of stealing, and allow him to return to his house immediately, on a horse he had sent by one of his serving-men.

Sir Thomas would not believe his ears, and could scarce believe his eyes, even when he had himself closely examined the hand-writing and the seal ; but he could not so easily be brought to part with his prisoner. There was the charge of murder yet to be entered into ; and he was proceeding in his usual rambling manner to state the accusation, when one of the yeomen on the settle started up on a sudden, and stated he had seen, when returning from work the night before, the said Mabel carried in the arms of a strange gallant, accompanied by a companion, and both were riding at so great a pace, they were quickly lost sight of. No sooner did his worship hear this statement, than sharply ordering Jemmy Catchpole to return the book to the prisoner and dismiss him, he stalked indignantly out of the chamber, and could not be brought to do any more justice business all that day.

CHAPTER II.

Ah, my swete swetyng !
 My lytyl prety swetyng,
 My swetyng wyl I love wherever I go ;
 She is so proper and pure,
 Full stedfast, stabill and demare,
 There is none such ye may be sure,
 As my swete swetyng.

OLD SONG.

Fly away !

Let my command force thee to that, which shame
 Would do without it. If thou understoodst
 The loathed office thou hast undergone,
 Why, thou wouldst hide thee under heaps of hills,
 Lest men should dig and find thee.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

Is this the place where virtue is to suffer ?

MASSINGER.

MABEL awoke in a feverish uneasy state the morning after her abduction, and found herself in a strange bed, having to it hangings of the costliest description. By degrees, the adventures of the preceding night came upon her memory. She could distinctly remember the treacherous gallant of her former acquaintance, and the forbidding features of his servile companion ; and then she had some faint remembrance of a courteous lady, who had assured her of her safety, and after a wondrous shew of kindness and protection, had made her take such refreshment as she needed, and then

conducted her, as she said, to her own chamber, that she might sleep with a full sense of security. Some time passed whilst the poor foundling endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts, to find out the reason she had been forcibly taken from her home.

After wandering from one topic to another with no other result than to get more bewildered than she was at first, she resolved to dress herself forthwith, believing it to be far beyond her usual hour for so doing; but when she sought her clothes, not a vestige was to be seen in any part of the chamber. This seemed stranger than all. She remembered the kind lady helping her to undress with manifold assurances of her perfect safety; and she recollected also placing of her things upon a chair that stood within a few paces of the bed; but there was the chair with its tapestry cushion uncovered by so much as a single thread. As she was marvelling at so unaccountable a disappearance, the door of her chamber opened, and there entered a lady of considerable attractions, both in form and figure, yet a close observer might have detected, despite the artful bloom on her cheek, that she had passed her youth. Her head was dressed in the latest Venetian tire; an open collar of the newest fashion disclosed the whiteness of her neck, and a dress of orange tawney silk, fairly trimmed with the whitest lace, set off the proportions of her figure to the completest advan-

tage. She was followed by a female, who seemed by her dress to be a servant, carrying on her arm what appeared to be sundry articles of wearing apparel.

Doubtless the first of these two was the kind lady of whom Mabel had been thinking, for she came smiling to the bedside, kissed the fair foundling with an amazing affectionateness, asked a thousand questions in a breath how she had fared, how she had slept, whether she would rise, and what she would choose to break her fast with; and then, scarce allowing the other opportunity to give a single answer, she informed her she had brought her servant to tire her in such appareling as she had considered fittest for her wear, as the things her young friend wore were of far too mean a sort for a person she loved so dearly. Mabel was not suffered to make any objection. The rich beauty of her new attire was temptingly displayed before her admiring eyes, and jewels of the fairest water lay dazzlingly beside it. She thought them a rare sight indeed; but 'twas all in vain she declared them to be much too fine for her wearing, the kind lady would hear nothing of the sort, stopped her mouth with all sorts of endearing expressions, and fairly pulled her from the bed, entreating she would allow her sweet lovely person to be attired without a word more.

As she was being dressed, she could not help

observing the exquisite work in the arras that surrounded the chamber, upon which was depicted, in the most glowing colours, the loves of Venus and Adonis. Nothing could be so beautiful she thought, save the carved corners of the bedstead, each of which represented a naked Cupid, figured to the life, grasping the stem of a palm-tree with one arm, and holding back the silken curtains with the other, and looking under them with an expression that seemed to say there was in the bed something beyond conception admirable. At each corner of the chamber were fair statues of marble, the very loveliest and loveliest objects that had ever been produced by the sculptor's art, and there was scarce any one thing about her that did not bear on it such forms of beauty as are most enticing to the young and imaginative mind. Certes, for all such cunning was displayed in these figures, whereon whatever art could do in fashioning what was most graceful had been essayed, a piece of nature's more perfect handiwork there present outstripped them all.

"O' my life, sweetest creature ! how exceeding beautiful thou art !" exclaimed the lady, gazing on Mabel, as if in an absolute wonder.

"Dost think so, indeed !" replied the half-dressed beauty, blushing somewhat, to the great heightening of her most moving graces.

"Think so? O, thou dear rogue !" said the lady, in an arch way ; "wouldst have me believe

thou knowest nothing of the matter? Hast never looked on those unrivalled features? Hast never beheld those exquisite limbs? Fie! fie! Thou can'st help knowing it better than any, and thinking of it too."

"Believe me, I have thought of it but little," answered the pretty foundling.

"Nay, I will believe nothing of the sort," responded the other: "there was never a woman yet that knew not her own attractiveness, and it is said some do occasionally see and think more of it than other folks; but that there should exist in this world a creature of the most ravishing loveliness ever beheld, who knoweth, and thinketh but little of her own rare perfections, is clean out of all credibility."

"I assure you, it is as I have said," observed Mabel.

"Heaven forgive thee!" exclaimed the lady, shaking her head, and laughing very prettily; "never met I so undeniable a story-teller, and yet coming from so fair a source, no truth could appear half so winningly. Prythee, take my word then, since thou hast such lack of proper acquaintance with the subject; and be assured, one more semely featured, and gracefully limbed withal, is not to be met with, search the whole kingdom through." Then, turning to the tirewoman, whose large dark eyes and full round face, expressed somewhat of

wantonness, she added, "What dost think of it, Abigail?"

"An' it please you, my Lady Comfit, methinks there needs no questioning," replied the tirewoman, then on the floor, sitting on an embroidered shoe, seemingly of the smallest size, as Mabel sat on a chair with the lady leaning over her. "Touching the face, if ever any man gazed on features so moving, beauty hath gone out of my knowledge; and as for the person—who hath ever looked on so neat a foot, so delicate an ankle—or so exquisite a leg as there are here?" Mabel blushing deeper than ever, because of there being at that moment a greater display of her symmetry of limb than she thought becoming, drew away her foot hastily, and rose from her seat.

"Oh, the pretty rogue, how rosily she blushes!" exclaimed Lady Comfit, laughingly, drawing the abashed maiden towards a large mirror. "Now, if thou wilt not believe other evidence, deny thyself if thou canst." And thereupon her companion pointed to the reflection. Mabel saw before her a form and figure such as hath been described, arrayed with all the choiceness which skill in dress could give to them, for she wore a velvet suit of a plum colour, worn low, and delicately powdered with gold and pearl, her fair neck embraced with a necklace of blushing rubies, and jewels of greater rarity in her hair, ears, and stomacher. The poor

foundling could hardly believe she was the admirable creature she saw in all that bravery, and Lady Comfit and Abigail looked at each other, as if they mightily enjoyed her astonishment.

"Methinks I have never appeared so comely in all my life before," observed the simple girl.

"Thou art right I doubt not," replied the lady, with a smile; "but thou shalt no longer hide so bright a light. Come along, I prythee, my sweet creature. Such rare attractions should be rarely appreciated, or huge wrong would be done thee. Thou shalt have choice worshipping. This way, dear sweet rogue, and I will tell thee more anon." So saying, with her arm round the waist of the gentle Mabel, Lady Comfit entered an adjoining chamber.

If the humble foundling had been dazzled by the costly furnishing of the bed-chamber, how much more reason had she to be similarly influenced, when she beheld the greater splendour of the chamber she had just entered. The arras was more gorgeous, and on it was depicted, in the very richest colouring, the loves of Jupiter, and others of the heathen deities. In one place was Danaë, yielding her enamoured nature to the golden shower—a type of that species of affectionateness still met with in woman, that can be easily procured by the like means. There, Leda caressing of the stately swan, whose graceful movements and fair apparelling, had

so won upon her admiration—symbolical of that sort of loving amongst the sex, which hath no better origin than mere outward appearances: and elsewhere, Europa, borne over the yielding waves by the bull, whose lustiness of limb had provoked her to such hardihood as lost her to her company—a right true picture of that sort of feeling in women occasionally met with, miscalled love, which doth so conspicuously savour of the mere animal. Besides these, were subjects out of all number of a like description, so movingly delineated, that it was scarce possible for any that gazed on them, not to find their dispositions softened into a similar tendency.

But every object in both chambers seemed studiously fashioned so as to breathe of love—not that love which is the pure offspring of the affections, and can only live in the rare atmosphere of intellectual beauty; but that more gorgeous blossom—often mistaken for the modest flower of the same name,—that springs from rank rich soils, and thrives best in the stifling air of luxurious indulgence. Both apparently are warmed by the same sun, so are the rose and the poppy—and oft appear of the same glowing complexion, as shall be found in the flower and the weed just named; but the one hath in it so sweet an essence, that ever so small a particle delighteth the senses by its exqui-

siteness, and can do harm to none—whilst the other secretes deadly intoxicating juices, which give an unnatural stimulus to those who take it for their enjoyment, fevers the blood, poisons the nature, and kills the soul.

Lady Comfit allowed the simple girl to admire as much as she would, without interruption, the costly and subduing beauty of the several ornaments of the chamber, and then led her to a table prodigally garnished with all manner of spicy viands and stimulating wines. Meats and pasties, divided the space with glass bottles filled with the products of the choicest vineyards, rich silver cups and platters, china dishes, and embroidered napery. Mabel who had all her life eat her simple meal of cold meat and bread, off a wooden trencher, accompanied with a draught of small ale from a horn cup, looked in some amazement at such store of tempting delicacies displayed in vessels of such extreme value as here presented themselves for her accommodation. Lady Comfit pressed her to name her choice, and she seemed so sore puzzled that the lady kindly recommended such dishes as she herself most approved of, portions of which the poor foundling thankfully accepted, and found of a marvellous delectable flavour.

“And now what wine dost prefer, sweetest?” enquired the lady lovingly.

"An' it please you I would rather a cup of small ale," replied Mabel, at which the lady and her tire-woman laughed very pleasantly.

"Small ale, dear heart!" exclaimed Lady Comfit. "Such drink is never for ladies—'tis fit only for serving men, and such low persons."

"Then perchance, a draught of spring water might be had readily?" asked her companion, at which the other two laughed more pleasantly than before.

"Water!" cried the lady at last. "I'faith I should be much to blame were I to let thee swallow such unwholesome stuff. Here is wine for thee, and plenty—the choicest withal that ever came of the grape."

"But I am monstrous thirsty," observed Mabel, "and wine is of too great a strength for one so unused to it as am I, to quench their thirst with."

"Tush, my sweet creature," replied Lady Comfit; "this wine is not so strong as small ale, be assured of it. Is it Abigail?" asked she of her attendant.

"'Tis made expressly for ladies' drinking, an' it please you, my lady," answered Abigail, very readily. "A child might drink a bottle of it with as much innocence as though it was mere water."

"Without doubt," added her mistress, taking one of the bottles and pouring part of its rich contents into a silver goblet. "I will myself shew thee how

harmless a beverage it is." So saying she raised the brimming vessel to her lips and swallowed it at a draught. Assured by this that there could be no harm in it, the unsuspecting Mabel allowed herself to take a moderate draught, seeing which her companions looked at each other with a peculiar smile, and presently, as she found the spicy nature of what she had eat so plentifully, made her mouth hot and dry, after the same pressing entreaties and earnest assurances, she repeated it. At last finding the simple girl could not be persuaded to eat or drink a mouthful more, the attendant cleared away the things, and Mabel was left alone with the lady.

Directly they were alone the latter drew her chair close to that of her young companion, and with an irresistible air of sincerity and friendliness, took one of the poor foundling's hands in her own.

"What a happy woman thou art!" exclaimed Lady Comfit, with wonderful emphasis, and observing Mabel looked as though she could not comprehend what should make her so very happy, added with increasing earnestness, "What a proud woman thou art!" This exclamation appeared to be less understood than the preceding. "At least thou *shouldst* be," added the lady, in a marked manner. "I doubt not there are thousands of women would give all they are worth in the world to have thy good fortune."

"Indeed!" cried Mabel, in a famous astonishment.

"Ay, that would they, my sweet creature," cried her companion, pressing her hand very affectionately. "But who of them all hath thy desert? Art thou not formed to be loved as no woman was ever loved before?" At hearing this the poor foundling appeared to marvel too greatly to say anything.

"O' my word, thou art like to become the envy of all women," continued Lady Comfit. "Methinks 'twould be a most pitiful shame to allow of such perfections as thou hast, to be shut up in an obscure place where they can be seen of none who would hold them in proper appreciation, whilst the power-fullest noble in the land is sighing of his heart away with a sweet hoping so fair a creature might be esteemed of him, cherished by him, and caressed by him in such fashion as she is most worthy of. But I will wager my life on't thou hast too noble a spirit to be of such poor commodity; and art of too kindly a disposedness to let a princely gentleman, anxious to gratify thy every wish, linger out his days in hopeless misery, for lack of that happiness thou alone art capable of bestowing."

"I?" exclaimed Mabel, incredulously. "Believe me, I know of no such person—have seen no such person. Surely there is some huge mistake in this."

"Never did truer thing occur," replied the lady.

"It matters not that thou shouldst never have beheld him—be assured he hath seen thee, and, as it could not help being, at the first sight of so much ravishing beauty, his noble heart was taken close prisoner, and he hath ever since been in a passionate phrenzy of impatience for the gaining of thy dear love."

"Methinks 'tis a strange way of shewing such, to tear me from my friends," observed the poor foundling.

"'Tis the way of these great ones, sweetest," answered her companion. "But 'tis done out of no disrespect, be assured; for he hath ordered thou shalt be treated with as much honour as though thou wert a crowned queen."

"'Tis exceeding strange!" said Mabel, marveling the more, the more she heard.

"Thou wilt see him anon," added the other. "And doubt not he will love thee with so deep a fondness, he will leave thee no cause for one moment's disquietude. Thou wilt be made happy straight—and such happiness shalt thou enjoy as thou hast never had experience of. All that divinest love and boundless magnificence can effect, shall crown thy wishes—never ending pleasures shall entice thy inclinations the whole day long—the splendid pageantries of state—the homage bestowed on absolute power—the observances and ceremonies of highest rank shall be for thy particular

honour on all occasions; and wherever thou art inclined to turn thy steps, thou shalt meet with some new delight of infinite exquisiteness provided for no other end than to assist in making perpetual thy inconceivable felicity."

"Indeed I know not what to say on such a matter," observed her young companion, somewhat bewildered at so magnificent a perspective. "I am so very humble a person, I cannot think myself fit to be raised to so proud a station; and in all sincerity I say it, I would rather back to my friends, to give place to some one more worthy."

"I will never allow of thy doing so foolish a thing," exclaimed Lady Comfit, in some seeming astonishment. "Thou must needs be the worst possible judge of the matter that exists; and I am thy friend, sweetest, and therefore the very properest to advise thee in such a case." And thereupon the lady squeezed the foundling's hand, and gazed on her more affectionately than ever.

"I should feel extremely bounden to you, would you counsel me what to do," said the simple girl. "In very truth, my humbleness seemeth to me utterly inconsistent with such grandeur as you have spoken of."

"Nay, 'tis thy modesty maketh thee think so," replied the other. "None can be so fit as thou art. Didst not note how famously thou didst become these costly vestments? Just so admirably wilt thou

become the love of that princely gentleman who commanded them for thy wearing. Trouble thyself nothing concerning of thine own thoughts. Thou art too young, sweetheart, to see these things in the properest light. Let it suffice, that the proud noble who loveth thee with such infiniteness, in his heart alloweth of none being so exalted; and to convince thee how great is his respect, hath required me, Lady Arabella Comfit, an earl's daughter, to be thy companion and friend, and shew thee such prodigal kindness as I would show to no other living."

The poor foundling could scarce express her estimation of being treated with such handsomeness as to have an earl's daughter for her companion, and the latter having at last managed to allay her doubts and excite her curiousness, bade her amuse herself as she chose for a short time; and then caressing her with extreme affectionateness, left the chamber. Mabel felt in a strange state of excitement. Not a thought of evil entered her pure mind, for she was of that extreme unsuspiciousness which exists only in perfect innocence and genuine truthfulness—a nature which, like a clear mirror in the fair sunshine, is made to throw o'er what it looks on, the light shining upon itself.

In the mean while the Lady Arabella proceeded to a distant chamber, with an expression on her countenance very unlike what she had put on before

the gentle Mabel, and as soon as she had opened the door, she gave way to a most unequivocal satirical sort of laugh. There was no one present but a gallant of a middle age, dressed in the foppery of the times, who had the look of confirmed dissoluteness which a long course of prodigal living usually bestows, and he was idling the time away by picking of his teeth, with the remnants of his recent meal before him. The room was nothing like so choicely furnished as those the lady had left, yet it had sufficient comfort in it to content any ordinary person.

"Ha! how flyeth the game, Moll?" exclaimed the gallant, on noticing the entrance of his visitor. "Dost she take the lure bravely? Cometh she fairly into the decoy? But I see by thy laughing she hath been so prettily mewed, that she careth not to ruffle her feathers against the golden wires of her cage."

"O' my life, thou hast hit it," replied the lady, as she threw herself into a chair. "The pretty fool is in such conceit of her splendid prison, she seemeth well content to stay in it all her days."

"She hath more wit than I have seen in her, if she can get it to last beyond a month or so," observed her companion; "then she may fly where she lists. But hast taken care to fill her sufficiently with my lord?" inquired he.

"To the very throat," answered the other. "In-

deed, I have so crammed her with him, that it must needs take some hours ere she can require another meal."

"Nay, keep up her stomach, I prythee, Moll," cried the gallant, laughingly. "When my lord comes she may carve for herself. I shall start off on the instant, to acquaint him with the joyful intelligence, and ride like a post all the way; and I hope he will bountifully remember my monstrous pains to provide him with so dainty a leman; for in sober truth, my long ill luck at the cards, a murrain on them! hath left me as near bare of coin as a pig's tail is of feathers." So saying, with a laugh half stifled with a yawn, he rose from his seat, stretching his arms out to the near bursting of his doublet.

"As I live, I do look for some famous reward myself, or I would not be so intent upon the matter," observed the lady; "and yet I marvel he should get so desperately enamoured of a raw chit, that hath scarce sense enough to know she walks upon two legs."

"Methinks he had better have taken to thee, Moll, eh?" inquired he, somewhat in a sarcastic manner. "Mass! there is exceeding little of the raw chit about thee, I'll warrant; and as for knowing, I would wager a dozen marks thou couldst spare a goodly share of thy knowledge, and yet be all the better for't."

"For which I have to thank thee, thou thrice accursed villain!" fiercely exclaimed his companion, starting into a sudden rage at the taunt. "I was well enough ere I listened to thy beguiling."

"Doubtless," coolly replied the other; "well enough for one that is no better. And as for beguiling, thou took it so readily, it was clear 'twas an exceeding familiar acquaintance with thee."

"Thou lyest, thou paltry cozening knave!" cried the lady, looking monstrous black at him. "There could not be one more virtuous in this world ere I had such ill hap as to meet with thee."

"Marry, but I have huge doubts of that, Moll," said the gallant, quietly putting on his hat; "virtuousness such as thine must needs have been wonderfully cheap to the haver, for, as I well remember, I did but give thee a few pretty trinkets, a few pretty words, and a few pretty caresses, and thy virtue went to pieces, like a rotten apple under a cart-wheel."

"Why thou infamous pitiful wretch, how dost dare say such things of me!" exclaimed the Lady Arabella, looking as terribly indignant, and as horribly enraged, as a bad woman could, who is taunted with her infamy. "Thou hast had the villainy to plot my undoing—thou hast sought me, flattered, fondled, and betrayed me to my ruin—day after day thou hast sworn thy honourableness and thy undying affection into my deluded ears, and I be-

lieving—poor fond fool!—thy prodigal oaths and protestations, left a worthy gentleman who loved me as his life—left home, friends, all things that were most worthy of my caring for, to cling to such baseness as I have here before me!”

“Well said, Moll, o’ my life well said!” he observed, as if applauding her to the echo. “I read the same notable speech, word for word, in a book of jests I had t’other day of one of my lord’s players. I should not have credited thy memory was so good.”

“Get thee gone, thou pestilent jackal, to the lion thy master,” cried his companion, with no little bitterness; “thy riotous ill-living hath brought thee to such a pass, that thou art a disgrace to thy family, and a shame to thy friends, and can only continue thy discreditable existence by coney-catching for some more prodigal villain than thyself.” At hearing this the other took to whistling, yet he did it with so ill a grace, ’twas evident he was in no humour for music. “Out on thee, thou cozening rascal!” continued she, with increasing emphasis; “away, thou contemptible cheat! What new trick hast learned to take gulls by? Art not in a brave humour for stealing? Wouldst cut a purse—wouldst cog—wouldst foist—wouldst forswear thyself a thousand times? Go get thee a rope for thine own hanging, and thou wilt save the constables the trouble of carrying thee to the gallows!”

"Hold thy cursed prate, thou foul-mouthed ronyon!" said the gallant, in that deep sort of voice which usually heralds a monstrous passion.

"Thou art a scurvy knave that would willingly do such dirty work as other men would scorn," replied the lady with infinite disgust.

"Away, thou callet!" exclaimed the other contemptuously. "Thou wouldst needs pass for a lady, fersooth, and hast a monstrous hankering after gentility. Fine o' my life! Moll Crupper a lady! Alack, for good manners! The sadler's daughter transformed into Lady Arabella Comfit. Here's goodly coney-catching! A fine morning to you, an' it please you, my lady! I commend myself very heartily to your ladyship's excellent consideration. Believe me I am infinitely bound to you for your ladyship's exquisite sweet condescension, and very humbly take my leave of your ladyship's most absolute and very admirable noble nature."

So saying her companion, with a profusion of mock respect, was making his way towards the door, when Moll Crupper, who liked so little to be minded of her bad disposedness, evidently liked less to be told of her low origin, for she darted from her chair with a violent execration, and sprung upon her accuser with the fury of a tigress, pulling him by the hair with one hand, whilst she curried his face famously with the other. But this was borne with anything save patience by the gallant.

No lack of coarse abuse mingled with the commonest oaths accompanied her endeavours to do him hurt, till after twisting her wrists till she desisted of her attack, and cried out with the pain, he pushed her away from him with such force, that she fell on the floor as if every sign of life had fled. This put the gallant in some sort of fear, for he had many reasons for wishing at that moment no great harm should happen to her, so he ran and lifted her up with an extraordinary shew of affection. But the pretended lady was far from being dead. She knew what was going forward, and was disposed to take advantage of it, for she was well aware she could not exist without the assistance of her companion. She remained motionless as a stone, till her associate in villainy had exhausted every epithet of affection upon her, and every species of execration upon himself. Then she gradually opened her eyes, gradually employed her limbs, and gradually found the use of her tongue, as she had been in the habit of doing during a long series of similar conflicts.

"What a wretch have I been to use thee so uncivilly, my sweet life," said he, with all a lover's fondness, as she rose from the floor, half reclining in his arms, drawing her hands over her face with a look that bespoke a perfect unconsciousness of what had been going forward. "I know not what devilish spirit possesseth me. 'Slight, I could go

and beat out my brains against a post, I feel such hatred of myself; for never truer woman lived than thou art, my dear Moll, and so exquisite a creature to love, I shall never meet any where."

"Nay, nay, I have been to blame, sweet heart," replied the fictitious Lady Arabella very kindly. "I had no need to have angered thee, for thou hast ever been a monstrous deal more good to me than I have deserved."

"Say not so, my wanton," exclaimed her companion with increased affectionateness. "Thy deserts are beyond all reckoning, and I hold thee in such absolute love as cannot cease unless my life be extinguished."

"Dear heart, how I love thee for saying that," cried she, in a perfect ecstasy. "Thou art a noble, bountiful, brave gentleman as ever breathed, and I care not a rush for the finest fellow that wears a head, for he can be nought in comparison with thy inestimable sweet goodness."

What followed may be readily imagined. Each of these two worthies, who a moment since joined so soundly in mutual abuse, and were desperate to do some mischief, now held up each other's qualities as beyond all parallel, and would have gone through all manner of dangers to have saved the other from hurt. But these sort of scenes had been common with them for a long time past. They caressed, abused, and drubbed one another with

infinite heartiness—and the next moment carressed, abused, and drubbed, and with more heartiness than ever. But it so happened on this occasion, having gone through the regular series, they left off at the first stage of the next, in consequence of the gallant being forced to take his departure without further delay.

CHAPTER III.

*And then THE LOVER**Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress's eyebrow.*

SHAKESPEARE.

He coude songes make and wel endite,
 Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.
 So hote he loved that by nightertale
 He slep no more than doth the nightingale.
 Curteis he was, lowly, and servisable,
 And carf before his fader at the table.

CHAUCER.

If I had wytt for to endyte
 Off my lady both fayre and free;
 Of her goodnesse then wolde I write—
 Shall no man know her name for me.

OLD SONG.

SIR MARMADUKE DE LARGESSE, his worthy chaplain, and his old acquaintance the Antiquary, were sitting round a table in the library seemingly wonderfully intent upon something. The good old knight sat back in his seat with one hand upon the handle of his rapier, and the other resting upon the arm of his high-backed chair, his benevolent cheerful countenance impressed with a sort of curious pleasure, and his white beard and hair looking more silvery than ever they had. At a little distance from him sat Sir Johan, getting to be almost as lustily limbed as his patron, his plump sleek fea-

tures proving he had as much reason to be as prodigally grateful to Providence as he had been at any time; and also exhibiting in his countenance a pleasant mingling of curiousness and satisfaction. Both of these gazed upon Master Peregrine, who, with as much of the pantaloon in his appearance as ever, sat forward leaning of his elbows on a large book open upon the table, his hands holding a paper, and his eyes peering through his spectacles with a marvellous gratification, sometimes at his companions, and anon at what he held in his hands.

"Never read I anything so sweetly fashioned!" exclaimed he. "I remember with what singular exquisite satisfaction I first read the most choice ballads of Fair Margaret and Sweet William, Lord Thomas and Fair Eleanor, and Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard, but the pleasure was nought in comparison with what I felt on perusing this most rare writing."

"Marry, give me Chevy Chase, or the Battle of Otterbourne!" cried Sir Marmaduke. "I never hear a verse of either but it stirreth me like a very trumpet."

"I deny nothing of their excellence," observed the chaplain; "but who could for a moment compare them with the inestimable sublimity of Pindar, the luscious sweetness of Anacreon, or the moving melodiousness of Musæus? I do assure you, that among the Greeks—to say nought of the Romans

—there is such brave store of odes, songs, and elegies of the very choicest sort, as doth exceed all possible comprehension.”

“Tut, tut!” replied the antiquary, impatiently; “wouldst make me believe there hath ever been anything writ, or thought of, more gallant than Havelok the Dane, more pastoral than Harpalus, or more touching than Lady Greensleeves?”

“Beyond the possibility of doubting, worthy sir,” answered Sir Johan; “there shall easily be found in Homer things more martial, in Theocritus things more natural, and in Sappho things more tender.”

“Passion o’ my heart! what hath become of thy wits, I wonder!” exclaimed Master Peregrine, in a manner between astonishment and indignation; “I marvel that thou shouldst essay to prove thyself such an addle brain.”

“Nay, if any brains be addled, Master Peregrine, it must needs be your own,” replied the chaplain; “for ’tis out of all sense and reason to slight the infinite choicer beauties of classic song for a parcel of silly old ditties.”

“Silly old ditties!” echoed the enraged antiquary, looking over his spectacles, as though he had a mind to do Sir Johan some grievous harm. “Is ‘Lustely, lustely let us saile forthe!’ a silly old ditty? Is ‘Kytt hathe lost hur key,’ a silly old ditty? Is ‘Jolly good Ale!’ a silly old ditty? Is Guy of Colbronde, or Sir Tristrem, or

John Dory, or a thousand others of the like unmatchable perfectness, silly old ditties? thou shallow-witted, ignorant, poor goose, thou!"

"I cry you mercy, my masters," exclaimed Sir Marmaduke, good-humouredly, as he had oft done on many similar occasions. "When you get to talk of these matters, you are like unto two lusty bulls, who cannot enter the same pasture without going to loggerheads. Surely, in advocating the excellency of a thing, there is no argument in squabbling."

"Silly old ditties!" repeated Master Peregrine, with considerable emphasis.

"For mine own part," continued the knight, "though I will in no way seek to lessen the estimableness of the ancient writers, either Greek or Latin, some how or other these same old ballads afford me that rare pleasure I have never found in songs of a more classic sort."

"Perchance, I am somewhat to blame, in having expressed myself so slightly of such things," observed Sir Johan, whose orthodoxy never led him to oppose his patron's opinion; "I meant no offence, believe me. Indeed, I do opine some of these excellent fine ballads, so liked of my esteemed friend here, are of a wonderful delicate conception; but Providence, who is ever so exceeding bountiful, hath wisely ordained us different tastes, that one liking one thing, and another liking something

different, no one thing should exist without being held in some estimation."

"Silly old ditties!" Master Peregrine *would* have said again, but his better nature prevailed, and he swallowed the muttered words; yet, with an air of triumph, as if he thought himself on a par with one of his beloved heroes of the Round Table.

"And now for that sweet song you have promised us," exclaimed Sir Marmaduke; "you have spoken of it so fairly I am all impatient to be hearing it."

"O^a my word and so am I," replied his chaplain, eagerly; "and as Master Peregrine hath such famous judgment in these matters, I doubt not he hath a rare treat in store for us." At this compliment to his judgment, all trace of displeasure vanished from the features of the antiquary; and he said some civil speech, in modest denial of having more judgment than so learned a person as Sir Johan, took off his spectacles, wiped them carefully, replaced them, hemmed some twice or thrice, brought the paper somewhat closer to his nose, and with an appropriate serious manner read what is here set down:—

THE POET'S SONG OF HIS SECRET LOVE.

“ Upon the dainty grass I lay me down
When tired labour on mine eyelids rest,
And then such glad solace I make my own,
As none can know, for none can be so blessed.
For then my sweeting comes, so gallantlie,
I cannot but conceive she loveth me.

I prythee tell me not of such bright fires
As burn by day or night in yon fair skies;
For when I bring her to my chaste desires
Sun, moon, and stars are shining in her eyes.
For then my sweeting, so well-favoredlie,
With Heaven-like gaze declares she loveth me!

The tender blossoms blush upon their bowers,
The luscious fruit hangs trembling by the leaf:
But her rose-tinted cheek out-glows all flowers,
Her cherry lips of fruits I prize the chief.
For then my sweeting so delightsomelie,
Doth take her oath upon't, she loveth me!

Alack, what pity 'tis, such moving sight
Should cheat my heart within an idle dream!
'Tis fantasy that brings such loving light—
The fruit I never taste—but only seem:
Oh, would my sweeting, in all honestie,
Vouchsafe to give some sign she loveth me!

I take no pleasure now in pleasant sports,
I find no profit in books old or new;
I hie me where my life's fair queen resorts,
For she's my pastime and my study too:
And of my sweeting, say I urgentlie—
What would I give to know she loveth me!

Yet though my heart with her so long hath been,
I know not she takes heed of my behoof,
I gaze on her yet care not to be seen—
I long to speak and yet I keep aloof.
And whilst my sweeting fills my thoughts—Perdie!
How oft I think—*perchance* she loveth me.

Where'er I turn methinks I see her face,
If any lovely thing can there be found;
The air I breathe is haunted with her grace,
And with her looks the flowers peep from the ground.
I pray my sweeting, very earnestlie,
She may incline to say she loveth me.

But when from all fair things I travel far,
Enwrapped within the shroud of darkest night;
She rises through the shadows like a star,
And with her beauty maketh the place bright.
And of my sweeting breathe I tenderlie,
Fortune be kind, and prove she loveth me!"

"Indeed, 'tis a sweet ballad and a simple!"
exclaimed Sir Marmaduke, who had listened with
a famous attentiveness.

"And of a most chaste and delicate fancy,"
added his chaplain, who seemed not a whit less
pleased. "O' my word, it is long since I have
heard verses writ with so natural a grace, or of so
truly dainty a conceit. It remindeth me of those
exquisite simple, tender poems, that are to be
found here and there scattered amongst productions
of the minor Greek poets."

"Dost not know by whom it is written, Master
Peregrine," enquired the old knight, seemingly to

prevent the scornful reply the antiquary was about making to Sir Johan's allusion to the superiority of the classic writers.

"No, nor can I guess," answered Master Peregrine; "I have never seen nor heard of it before, and I am in some doubt as to its exact age, yet I could venture to make a guess from certain marks it hath, that it cannot be later than the time of Henry the Eighth."

"'Tis like enough," observed Sir Marmaduke. "Perchance, it may be one of those same ballads our young scholar hath learned of his mother, and hath copied for your express delectation, left it in the book, and so forgot it."

Nay, that can scarce be," replied the antiquary; "for he hath oft times told me he knew of no more than such as he had already given."

Just at this moment, the conversation was stopped by a knocking at the door, and the entrance of the very person they were speaking of, who received a hearty welcome from all, but particularly from the good old knight. William Shakspeare glanced around as if in search of some one, but evidently by his looks, he saw not the one he wanted.

"What, hast had a bout at cudgel play?" exclaimed Sir Marmaduke, merrily, as he noticed the bandage that still remained upon William Shakspeare's wounded head. Thereupon, he presently told how he had got it, which seemed to set them marvel-

ling greatly, and the old knight was much moved at hearing, that the fair creature he had helped to save from villains at Kenilworth was now completely in their power. He kept asking of questions about which way they went, and what sort of persons were they, intermingled with expressions of grief for the fate of the pretty damsel, and of hostility against her betrayers. He got, however, but indifferent answers, for in truth the youth knew a very little more than himself. Master Peregrine, whose appreciation of ballads was much higher than that of women, manifested no inconsiderable impatience at this turn in the conversation.

"Will Shakspeare!" cried he, at last; "Prythee, come here; I want thee awhile." The young student left Sir Marmaduke, and approached close to the antiquary. "Thou wilt do me a service, if thou wilt tell me where gottest thou this ballad." William Shakspeare glanced his eye at the paper, and on the instant, a very perceptible blush mantled his fair features. "Where didst have it from?"

"I wrote it, an' it please you, worthy sir," answered the young student, somewhat falteringly.

"Ay, 'tis in thy hand, I see; but whence came it?" enquired the other, more urgently.

"By'r lady, I do suspect the young rogue hath made it of his own invention," exclaimed the old knight.

"So think I," added his chaplain.

"Ey; dost mean to say these delicate verses are out of thine own head?" cried the Antiquary, in exceeding astonishment.

"Indeed, they are truly of my poor inditing," replied the young poet, modestly. Scarce were the words well out of his mouth when Master Peregrine, in an ecstasy of admiration, threw his arms round his neck, and hugged him as though he were a prodigal son returned to his old father after a long absence.

"Why, thou delectable sweet rogue!" exclaimed he, "where didst get such admirable choice ideas?"

"Methinks 'tis plain enough whence they proceeded," observed Sir Johan, with marvellous satisfaction. "I have taken huge pains for some length of time our young friend should have a proper acquaintance with the treasures of classic song, both Greek and Latin; and 'tis an easy matter to see how much my scholar hath profited by my instruction; for, as I said when I first heard those verses, they do remind me powerfully of some specimens of the minor Greek poets."

"Remind thee of a fig's end!" exclaimed Master Peregrine, contemptuously. "Cannot any one see with half an eye—save those ignorant poor coxcombs who are blind as bats—that this is a true ballad of the choice old school; and is it not well known what extreme pains-taking I have had with

this my scholar from the first, that he should be well grounded in ballad lore; and lo! here is my reward—which, in very truth, exceedeth my most sanguine expectations.”

“Nay, I will be bound by his answer,” said the chaplain, not at all disposed to give up the honour of having produced so creditable a scholar. “Pry-thee declare, my excellent young friend, whether I have not, at all convenient times, bespoke thy commendation of all that was most admirable in classic song?”

“That have you, honoured sir, and I thank you very heartily,” replied the youthful Shakspeare. Sir Johan looked satisfied.

“And tell me this, my king of nightingales,” cried Master Peregrine, too confident of his own right to allow of being deprived of them. “Have I not taken opportunity by the hand with thee, to make thee familiar with the rarest ballads that ever were writ?”

“Indeed you have, worthy sir, and I shall feel beholden to you all my life long,” answered the young poet. Sir Guy never looked so triumphant as did our antiquary.

“I will maintain, those verses are of the true lyric fashion,” observed Sir Johan, “and therefore they cannot help being the result of an acquaintance with their classic prototype.”

“Classic pudding!” exclaimed Master Peregrine,

getting to be somewhat in a rage. "If any will prove to me these verses are Greek verses, or Latin verses either, then will I allow they came of such teaching; but since it is plain to common sense, that what I here hold is a ballad, and, moreover, an English ballad, and, moreover, an English ballad of the true simple, graceful, chaste style of English ballad writing, methinks it shall want no conjuror to say it had its origin in that inimitable famous school, and oweth not one jot to Greek or Latin, or any such pitiful, poor, weak, dull, shallow, unprofitable rubbish."

"Rubbish!" cried the chaplain, astonished and indignant in no small measure; and he would doubtless have expressed himself with some force to that effect, had not Sir Marmaduke at that moment stopped him, by asking William Shakspeare if he had written anything of the sort before. To which he replied it was his first attempt: and to further questions answered, he had been reading of some choice love songs, and all at once he had a great desire to essay something of a like kind. Thereupon he got paper, and with a pen wrote those lines, which, not thinking much of, he had left in the book, intending to try and do something better at another time. This made all marvel greatly.

Certes it was far out of ordinary things to find one, still a boy as it might be said, wooing of the

Muses in such proper style. Yet, though none saw it, there had been gradual preparation of this for some time. The youthful poet had held communion with the philosophy of nature for years past, through that spirit of intelligence which breathes o'er all which belongeth to the beautiful and the good. He had laid down to dream of it; he had woke up to worship it. Wherever he went he beheld its presence. In all seasons he had felt its influence. The voices of the murmuring river called to him in his solitude—the shadows of the deep dark woods fell upon his thoughts—the opening glade, the far-off hills, and the fair skies, in all their glorious pageantry, haunted his hours of rest—the silent night rung with the echoes of a thousand songs tuned by the rarest band of forest choristers; and even in the chilliest winter, when trees bear nought but icicles, and the hard ground is smothered with frost and snow, where'er he walked the choicest flowers bloomed in their most fragrant robes—the sun smiled lovingly before his eyes; and verdure, sweetness, and beauty, made for him, all around, a garden of the very exquisitest delight.

But of late he had felt a something more than this; all the loveliest things of nature he had made of his familiar acquaintance, and had found in them such wisdom as nature never hath bestowed elsewhere; but to comprehend this wisdom in its fullest

meaning required the assistance of an interpreter. This interpreter was Love. This Love though, let it be known, as yet he was content with knowing at a distance. He had seen of him but little, just enough to know him by, and liked not appearing too bold a visitor, but rather a respectful acquaintance or humble poor friend, that would be glad of some help, but dare not, out of reverence, attempt any such familiarity as the acquainting him with his wants. Nevertheless he had managed in this slight companionship to acquire at his hands some small portion of that power which argueth a knowledge of all natural wisdom—and that was poetry. It had made its appearance like a fresh pure spring trickling in the delicatest clearest drops down a fair hill covered with verdure and studded with all manner of sweet blossoms; and now having it at its source, all that is to be done is to trace the progress of the stream, till it rushed a mighty river into the great ocean of immortality.

Finding that Sir Valentine had gone to join a hunting party some miles off, the young poet bent his steps homewards in great trouble of mind, because he knew not what to do regarding the poor foundling. As he was crossing a field, so lost in his musings as to be perfectly regardless of all other things, on a sudden a pair of hands from some one behind caught him round the head and blindfolded

him, and a loud laugh burst from several voices, after that fashion used by boys when they have succeeded in playing off any famous drollery.

"Now Will!" cried one, "use thy wits, I prythee, and tell us who hath hold of thee?"

"Nay, let me hear the voice," replied William Shakspeare, taking their pleasantry in very good part, though he felt not in the humour to join in it as heartily as he was wont.

"Odds codlings, that thou shalt, I'll warrant," answered a trembling old woman's voice close behind him; "for as I was a saying no later than the week before last Martlemas, over a brave fire in the chimney corner of neighbour Bavins——"

"Why, Mother Flytrap!" exclaimed the youthful Shakspeare, who had listened in exceeding astonishment, "how didst get so close to me and I not know it?" At this the laugh was louder than before.

"Here is a vile world!" cried some one in the dismallest tones ever heard; "here is a monstrous villainy! How darest thou to do such intolerable wickedness as to play the infamous game of hot-cockles in so holy a place as the church-yard?"

"I, Oliver Dumps!" exclaimed the blinded youth in huge consternation: "believe me, I have not played at hot-cockles this many a day." Whereupon the young rogues appeared as though they would

have rolled themselves in the grass they enjoyed themselves to such excess.

"An' it pul-pul-pul-pul please you," stuttered another familiar voice, "mum-mum-mum-mum master says, he wer-wer-wer-wer wants you to send him word—wer-wer-wer-wer what sixpenny gloves are a pair!"

"Why, sixpence, to be sure, Dickon," replied the other. "But I have a monstrous suspicion thou hast been sent on a fool's errand." Upon this all laughed so long and loudly, it looked as if there would be no end to their mirth.

"O' my life, now, here is Tom Greene at his tricks again!" said William Shakspeare all at once, for the other had betrayed himself by vainly attempting to stifle his laughter, and at this the hands were taken off his eyes amidst the uproarious shouting of the whole party, and turning round, he beheld his old schoolfellows, Greene, Burbage, Condell, and Hemings, staggering about with all sorts of strange motions, and filling the air with peal after peal of laughing.

"I was thinking of another matter, Tom," said the youthful Shakspeare, "else should I have found thee out much sooner, for all thou art so famous a mimic."

"Was ever so rare a jest played!" exclaimed one with a handsome cheerful countenance. "No

hungry luce ever took a hooked gudgeon more unsuspiciously than did Will Tom's well-managed baits. Mother Flytrap, Oliver Dumps, and stuttering Dickon, he would have sworn were behind him with as little remorse as a pig eats chesnuts; yet I will forswear pippins and marchpane if any other spoke save Tom Greene."

"I'faith! the cheat was well managed, Dick, I will allow," answered young Will; "but Tom is so Proteus a varlet, 'tis an easy matter for him to play the old woman, or perchance make such a wittol of himself as Dickon, or even take off the melancholy constable till such time as the melancholy constable may choose to take off him."

"What, wouldst have me in the stocks, thou rogue!" exclaimed Tom very merrily. "Marry! I like not such hose to my legs. But come, let us play a play, Will; we have not had that pleasant pastime of ours for weeks past."

"A play, Will—a play, I prythee!" cried Dick Burbage. "We have been looking for thee far and near, for I have got me a right mirthful interlude which my father hath left behind him, and if thou wilt take a part, we will do it in brave style, I warrant."

"Nay, let us have Gammer Gurton again!" said a stout sturdy little fellow, rather urgently.

"Thou art ever for playing Gammer Gurton, Condell," observed a tall sharp-looking boy. "Let

us have that goodly play of the Four P's. Will Shakspeare can do the Poticary, Dick Burbage the Pedlar, Tom Greene the Pardoner, and I the Palmer."

"And prythee, what shall *I* do in it, Hemings?" asked Condell.

"As I live, thou shalt have enough to do!" replied his companion; "for thou shalt play the part of all the spectators." At hearing this there was another good laugh amongst them.

"At present I have neither time nor humour for playing," answered William Shakspeare; "nor can I tarry a moment longer, for pressing matters hurry me away." This answer was evidently but little relished by any of the party, and they tried no lack of entreaties and persuasion to get him to join in their sports. Nevertheless they could not prevail in any way, and finding such to be the case, they parted with him at the top of Henley-street, and straightway made for a field called Salisbury-piece, to have a play by themselves.

John Shakspeare had been inquiring of the neighbours the whole morning long; but getting no intelligence of his son, he had returned with a little misgiving to his anxious wife. With her he found the widow Pippins, in as merry a mood as ever, and Mistress Malmsey and Mistress Dowlas looking with such kindness and comeliness as if they never intended to lessen the pleasantness of their features

or behaviour; and they had stepped in, hearing that William was not to be found, to offer their advice and sympathy, and hopes for the best, to their somewhat desponding neighbour. The widow had just described an exquisite jest she had played upon a drunken falconer, by abstracting the game from his bag, and putting therein a litter of kittens she had drowned the day before, and the alderman's wives were laughing heartily to induce their sad-hearted gossip to follow their goodly example. At this moment returned John Shakspeare from his fruitless errand, who was assailed by a whole succession of questions from all the women, to which his answers appeared in no way satisfactory, for though they spoke very forcibly their convictions, he was in this place or in that, beyond all contradiction, they marvelled exceedingly where he could have got to.

"It is so little like him to play the truant with us," observed Dame Shakspeare, striving to appear more satisfied with the matter than she was. "Indeed, he giveth me but small cause of blame, save that he will sometimes be poring over a book when he should be taking of his proper rest."

"Well, it doth puzzle me famously to know what some folks see in books," said the merry widow. "For mine own part, I care not for the best that ever was writ, unless it be a book of jests or riddles, and then I must have some one to read them,

for reading never took to me, and therefore 'tis natural I never took to reading. By my troth, now I do remember as fine a jest as ever was I played upon Sir Nathaniel, with a certain book of riddles that was left at my house by a strolling minstrel.*

The widow Pippins had scarce commenced her narrative, when the door opened, and he whom they had been in such travail about, made his appearance. All manner of exclamations saluted his entrance; some began to scold, and some to question, but he took no heed of them till he had received his mother's caresses, and then very readily made them acquainted with all that had happened to him. Here was famous matter for marvelling, and none of the gossips allowed it to lie idle on their hands. The aldermen's wives, who knew every body and every thing, entered into a famous history of Mabel. As for the forcible abduction, some considered it done by the parents to recover their child secretly, others suspected it was a scheme of Tom Lucy, assisted by some of his college companions as wild as himself, with no honest intention, but the widow stuck out it was nothing more than a jest of Sir Thomas's to afford himself a new subject for boasting of his marvellous cleverness in the playing of tricks.

Having exhausted all they had to say upon the subject, the gossips took their departure, and John Shakspeare was left to the society of his wife and

children. Of him it may be necessary here to say, he had gone on struggling, but the same reverses met all his exertions. He could scarce get a living even in the humblest manner, and he was often reduced to the saddest shifts that poverty can endure, but he went on with the same resolution, making no complaint to any, and striving to appear as contented as the rest. As for John a Combe, he proceeded much in the same way—unsocial, uncharitable, careless of his own comforts, and heedless of that of others—never opening his mouth to any person, save in the way of business, unless to breathe such bitterness of heart as shewed the fearful change that had come over his once noble and generous nature. But what had worked this fearful change none knew. The effects were terribly conspicuous. Every one beheld them and grieved at them; and put up with his uncivilness out of respect for the honourableness of his behaviour at an earlier time. Yet of the cause the most knowing of the gossips of the town knew nothing whatever. They marvelled more and more every day, till its commonness took off the edge of their wonder.

CHAPTER IV.

The subject of all verse
 Sydney's sister, Pembroke's mother.

BEN JONSON.

Give place, ye lovers, here before
 That spent your boasts and brags in vain;
 My lady's beauty passeth more
 The best of yours, I dare well faine,
 Than doth the sun the candle light,
 Or brightest day the darkest night.

LORD SURREY.

Art thou my son, that miracle of wit,
 Who once, within these three months, wert esteemed
 A wonder of thine age throughout Bononia?
 How did the university applaud
 Thy government, behaviour, learning, speech,
 Sweetness, and all that could make up a man!

FORD.

Both flowers and weeds spring when the sun is warm,
 And great men do great good or else great harm.

WEBSTER.

IN an anti-room adjoining of the queen's presence chamber, in her highness's palace of Nonsuch, there was a famous company of lords and ladies in different groups. Here would be a famous party of gallants paying of their court to the fairest of the throng, whereof the greater number were exceeding fair, and she was no other than Lady Rich, usually styled "the beautiful Lady Rich," and well she deserved so admirable a title, for nought could ex-

ceed the sweet exquisiteness with which the lily and the rose united their choicest graces to deck her delicate cheek ; or the soft subduing light that shone so delightfully within the fountains of her radiant looks. All her features were of the same unrivalled perfectness, and over them the spirit of beauty breathed so wooingly, that such as gazed upon the temple were irresistably drawn there to pay their devotions. Foremost in the circle of her admirers was one who, by the choiceness of his dress, the neatness of his speech, and the studied courtliness of his manner, was manifestly born only to shine in the atmosphere of a court. Every thing about him spoke the desire to please, and the ready smile that accompanied the delicate flattery, appeared to prove how aptly he could receive pleasure of another. This was Sir Christopher Hatton, the very mirror of courtesie and text-book of compliment, and the most finished courtier of his day. His apparel was not more dainty than his phrases, and his behaviour was of a kind fittest to accord with both. He moved as though he thought himself under the eyes of the graces, having every gesture so properly produced, it went not a hair's breadth from the most graceful position that could be accomplished under the circumstances. His features were so fashioned as to make all fair weather in his kalendar. The sun shone every day in the week. There was no winter, no clouds, no

eclipses. He would as soon have hanged himself as frowned. He would sooner have thrown himself into the Thames river than allowed an uncivil word to escape him. What was his age it would be difficult to guess with any exactness, for as he had been heard to say he considered age to be an exceeding vulgar fellow with whom he would hold no acquaintance, it is possible he disguised himself as much as he could to prevent his being known by so rude a person.

But Sir Christopher was not without possessing something of other talent beside the courtly accomplishments of fencing, dancing, and compliment, nevertheless his whole ambition was to apply such gift as part of the necessary appliances of a courtier, and he never made use of it, save only to help him at a pinch to exhibit his continual desire to please. About him were divers gallants and young gentlemen of the palace, who looked up to him as their model, and framed their speech, their apparel, and their behaviour, as nigh as might be to their great original. His last phrase by their means travelled quickly to all persons choice in their speech; and it was by the same assistance the last new step of his came into use amongst such as wished to be considered the very fashionablest dancers of the time.

In the recess of a window that looked out upon the grounds were another group, the cynosure of

which appeared to be a lady of a most delectable presence, whose ample delicate forehead and intelligent gaze, gave token of as rare a mind as ever was worthy of the choicest and beautifullest framing. She was a notable instance of woman's perfectness, — whose moving graces created the exquisitest thoughts in the minds of those gifted ones who came within their influence ; but the poetry of her own nature was full as exquisite as any that she called into being. Her voice breathed its very atmosphere—and her eyes were such bright casements, within which it hath ever loved to find its home. It is no marvel then she should be so much the admiration of all true lovers of excellence—that her good opinion should be so much coveted of such as sought after praise that is the most valuable, or that her smiles made wherever she went a midsummer garden of the mind's unfading flowers. Methinks 'tis scarce necessary to add that her perfect modesty kept worthy companionship with her noble mind, for it may be taken as an indisputable truth that high intelligence doth ever signify the presence of moral feelings equally exalted. Be sure that where the mind displays itself in its most sterling character, there is no alloy of any baseness. It is clean impossible it can be otherwise, for however it may sometime seem, nature alloweth of no such unnatural alliances. Signs of great intellect may appear where want of goodness is equally mani-

fest, but the former of these signs on close scrutiny, turn out to be not so admirable as they look—in fact, instead of being the sterling gold in its native purity, they are only such ores as require so much cleansing to put them into use, as will hardly repay the labour. It may perchance have been found that this preciousness hath had a bad look with it, but it only followeth of the rubs it may get of such base things as it may come in contact with. It is still as sterling as ever, despite appearances; and fair usage will keep it in that brightness it ought always to wear.

Leaning affectionately over the countess's chair, was a young gallant of a like noble brow, and of an aspect somewhat similar in its intelligent expression. There was something more of gravity, and there was something less of sweetness in the countenance, yet there were the same highmindedness beaming out of the sparkling eyes, and a similar thoughtful eloquence smiling around the corners of the delicate mouth. It was easy to be seen by this likeness, and by the tender familiarity with which one behaved to the other, that they stood in some relationship. They were brother and sister. Such a brother and sister as the world sees not in many ages,—perchance, may never see again, for they were not more alike in the admirableness of their outward lineaments, than they were in all manner of moral and mental qualities. Where shall we meet

with another Countess of Pembroke—the ready patroness of merit, yet outshining all merit with her own ; ever ready to pay her homage to virtue, yet in herself possessing such virtue as exceeded all other examples ? And where shall we look for another Sir Philip Sydney—the soul of honour, the spirit of chivalry, the courtliest among the courtly, and the bravest among the brave—though scarcely in the full dawning of his manhood, his wisdom went beyond that of the most experienced counselors, and though formed by the choicest gifts of nature to fill the proudest seats in the chiefest places of greatness, his ambition never went beyond the performing of valiant and generous deeds, writing worthily on honourable subjects, living with a proper respect, and dying with a becoming nobleness. In him knighthood possessed its last and rarest ornament, and manhood one of its most admirable examples. Genius acknowledged him as her son, and honour claimed him as her champion ; and every virtue that could grace humanity, where all in him that was human was of so gracious a nature, might justly have put forth a boast, that in him they shewed to the world how well they could adorn a man.

It may readily be imagined that this truly gallant gentleman was the love, the model, and the admiration of all the gallant hearts of his age. Indeed, by such as possessed the genuine chivalrous spirit,

he was regarded as a sort of deity. They considered no station so great as to be of his acquaintance, and no honour so estimable as to have his praise. It therefore followeth very naturally that Sir Reginald and Sir Valentine should have eagerly sought his friendship, the which their valour and honourable conduct had gained for them; and this known, it is in no way surprising the former of these young knights should now be standing at his elbow joining in the conversation with Master Arthur Gorges, a young gallant of great worthiness—my Lord Buckhurst, a nobleman favourably known to the muses, and divers other knights and nobles, whose love of song went hand in hand with their admiration of true valour.

Besides these there were a great crowd of nobles, knights, and ladies, gallants, courtiers, officers of the queen's household, commanders by sea and land, learned judges, grave prelates, and others of her highness's loving subjects of different ranks and conditions, intent upon paying of their court to their sovereign, as soon as she concluded her audience with certain ambassadors with whom she was now closeted. There was a great variety in the colours of the different rich stuffs, but with the exception of some few in their robes, every gallant wore the same fashioned doublet, trunks, hose, and shoe-roses, and every lady the same long stomachered dress with a stiff poking-out farthingale.

Some were whiling the time by admiring the figures on the cloth of tissue. The commanders were conversing of the famous good fortune of Sir Francis Drake, in his last voyage. The ministers were speculating on the probability of the queen's marriage with the Duke of Anjou. The courtiers amused themselves with tales concerning of the differences between my Lord of Leicester and the Earl of Sussex. The gallants were putting off their last learned graces of behaviour on such of the fair dames they could get to heed them. The ladies were conversing either of the newest Venetian fashion, or the latest jest of Master Tarleton, her highness's jester. And the judges and prelates were lamenting together the intolerable evils of witchcraft and papistry; but the circle around the Countess of Pembroke and Sir Philip Sydney were bewiling the hour in a manner more profitable to themselves, than did any of the others,—as I will here endeavour to shew.

“Touching the capabilities of our nature,” observed that illustrious scholar, “I am inclined to believe there is no greatness it may not aim at. But there can be no true greatness independent of the affections, for these are the springs that do refresh the ground, and make it bear the noblest and choicest plants at all proper seasons.”

“I cannot help thinking the same thing,” added his sister. “Perchance there have been philoso-

phers to whom all such feeling as love appeared utterly unknown; they might have scoffed at it in themselves and ridiculed it in others; but such examples should be looked upon as the result of unnatural circumstances—like unto flowers that lose their colour by growing in the dark—or fruits that part with their flavour by being planted in an improper climate. That is sure to be the truest wisdom that cometh of the most benevolent mind, for it embraces the whole world with some everlasting truth which hath universal happiness for its object; whilst the philosophy of such as have no such feeling in their hearts can be born only of books; they are mere scholars that have no better object in view than raising themselves above their fellows, instead of striving to raise their fellows up to them. Such a philosopher attains celebrity only by feeding on those who went before him:—his cunning is of a like kind with that of the serpent of Moses, which swallowed up all the rest.”

“Just so,” said Sir Philip Sydney; “for if we notice how love works upon the mind, we shall readily come at the philosophy of the affections. Taking the two examples of this feeling in ordinary acceptance, to wit, the lover and the philanthropist, we immediately see how generous love hath made them in their notions,—the one is ready to undertake any danger in the conviction of his mistress’s superiority to all her sex; the other would make any

sacrifice to benefit those who required his assistance, in the express belief of the extreme worthiness of the whole human race. The valour of love is equal to its generosity; and methinks these twins of comeliness will be found together in every example of a true knight and complete gentleman. Nothing can be so valiant as love, which makes so undeniable the Latin adage which declareth that love conquereth all things,—for love hath achieved the brightest deeds that are the glory of chivalry. But as love granteth whatever is most admirable to the object of its regard, it seeketh by all honourable means to make itself of a like perfectness; and is thus by degrees led to the attainment of the noblest offices, and to the possession of the most honourable accomplishments that can be acquired.”

“ So I have thought, though, as must needs be not in so excellent a fashion !” observed Sir Reginald.

“ But surely there is a vast distinction between what is called gallantry and genuine affection ?” exclaimed Lord Buckhurst. “ There are hundreds of fine popinjays to be met with, protesting a monstrous affectionateness for every woman they meet, and I never saw in them any of the virtues of which you spoke.”

“ So are there hundreds that affect great religiousness,” observed Sir Philip Sydney, “ which is done not out of any true reverence, but merely

because it is the fashion. But genuine gallantry is of an exceeding different nature. It is of a kin with that ancient worship that honoured all deities alike. Nevertheless, even in these instances there will be found a niche in the temple of the heart dedicated to the service of some unknown god; and throughout the whole nature there exists a continual anxiousness to have that place worthily supplied. In good time such desire is accomplished; and be assured, the idol there placed hath more worship than all the rest together."

"The true worship of love is goodness," added the Countess; "and it is a sign by which genuine affection may always be distinguished from mere profession. True love is purity, honesty, truth, honour, courtesy, and bravery confessed in action. Where there is any meanness, where there is any selfishness, where there is ought of falsehood, immodesty, uncivilness, cowardice, or villainy, true love never abideth. Doubtless some may assert this sweetener of life hath been found with some such base accompaniments as I have just named; but out of all doubt the latter is entirely different, and should be avoided for its unwholesomeness. It is like unto such honey as divers sorts of wild bees have been known to make from poisonous flowers."

"But how rarely shall we find this love in all its perfectness and purity!" exclaimed Lord Buckhurst.

“Nay, my good lord, it is none so rare!” replied Sir Reginald, with some earnestness. “Wherever woman hath a fair field for the development of her infinite perfections, such love will follow, as naturally as light springs from the sun; and to a knowledge of these absolute graces originated that proud sense of honour, and true nobleness of feeling in man, which hath done such famous achievements throughout Christendom, under the estimable name of chivalry.”

“True, Sir Reginald,” observed Sir Philip Sydney, with a glance of approbation at his young friend. “There are two states of society, in all outward appearance as far asunder as are the poles—where true love is ever to be met with. The one is the courtly empire of knights and ladies, which produceth the gallantest deeds and the honourablest behaviour—the other is the simple republic of shepherds and shepherdesses, where innocence is crowned with a garland of the freshest flowers of the field, and honesty jogs merrily along, enjoying the pleasant minstrelsy of the pipe and tabour.”

“Which, think you, is the happiest state?” inquired Master Arthur Gorges.

“That in which the wants are the fewest, and the desires of easiest attainment,” replied the other. “It is doubtful to which we ought to give the preference. Happiness may exist indifferently in either

because it is the fashion. And
of an exceeding different nature
that ancient worship that had
Nevertheless, even in these days
found a niche in the temple
to the service of some unknown
out the whole nature there
ness to have that place within
time such desire is accomplished
the idol there placed beside the
rest together."

"The true worship of him
the *Crucifixion*; and it is
affection may always be
True love is
profound honesty, and
honour is any man
where the
will

boys, dividing of my cares betwixt
love."

lord, you would soon pine for
countries you had left behind," ob-
served, with a smile.

The shepherd would be ever a sighing
the most accomplished knight in
land Sir Philip Sydney, with a like
He would be right glad to change
hamelled plain for the saddle of
his crook for a spear—his flock for
valiant knights—and his faithful
many fair ladies as he could get
durable matchless prowess."

"Try me ere I am condemned,"
said, laughingly. "I doubt hugely I
am tired. For is there not a famous
argument? Could I not delight my-
self of my true love's name wherever I
should be found more Chloes on a
hill? and then would I have such
rival swains of my own race
that they should follow me for after;
pipe till the flocks were weary
hold them, and so to learn of
all."

"It may be," said lord," said
the shepherd, "but take it

not as want of courtesy in me, if I doubt the possibility of so great a marvel."

"Now, without flattery, never met I so perfect a disbeliever," exclaimed Leicester, gallantly. "I would the fates had so ordered it as to have made the Countess of Pembroke an Arcadian shepherdess, and I her scarce worthy, yet too happy swain. Methinks so enviable a lot exceedeth all honour of chivalry; and whether in the valley or the grove, at the dance, or tending of my flock, believe me, the enjoyment of such rare happiness would put out of mind, as things only to be despised, such poor pleasures and distinctions as I have now in my possession."

"I am bound to you, my lord, for entertaining of such thoughts," replied his accomplished companion, courteously; "yet am I still of opinion, the noble place you now occupy would content you more than the most perfect state of shepherd life that is to be found. For as it is, you have in your power infinite opportunities of doing good, by affording your counsel and assistance to all such worthy objects as may require it; whilst, by your prominence in the public eye, you can, by acting as becomes your dignity, be an example of honour that every honourable nature would be glad to copy."

"Such I will strive to be with all my heart," exclaimed the Earl, with a seeming great sincerity.

"Indeed the most pleasurable part of the high station in which fortune, rather than my poor ability, hath placed me, I find to consist in the benefits I am enabled to confer on deserving persons. Nothing delighteth me more than to honour merit as it deserves; and I would gladly go out of my way any distance to meet with some worthy creature whom I could make happy."

Every one was famously pleased at hearing of so proper a speech from the Queen's favourite; but such was his usual manner, and such his customary words.

"Finding you, my good lord, in this happy mood," observed Sir Philip Sydney, "I would crave your countenance in behalf of a worthy friend of mine, who would be right proud of possessing it."

"Say who he is, and be assured of his merits receiving proper attention at my hands," said Leicester.

"His name is Edmund Spenser," replied the other; "and I look upon him to be as true a poet as ever wrote verse."

"Prythee bring him to me whenever it suits you," said the Earl, in his most winning manner. "I am all impatient to be acquainted with one who hath acquired such high honour as to be so lauded of Sir Philip Sydney."

"Believe me, my brother hath said no more than the worthiness of Master Spenser gives him title

to," added the Countess. "As far as I am capable of judging, he is one whom future ages will delight to reverence."

"I'faith, this Master Spenser hath great good fortune, methinks, to have his merits so approved by two such absolute judges," cried Leicester. "O' my life, I shall not be content till he number me among his friends. But though I am exceeding loth to leave such delectable society, I must fain hie me hence."

He had scarce uttered these words when he felt a nudge at his elbow, and, looking round, his eyes evidently met a familiar face, for, with a cheerful countenance, he called out, "Ha! Tarleton, what news?" The person he had so addressed, had a merry eye and a ruddy countenance; and in figure stood rather under the middle size—the which was neatly garmented in a suit of Lincoln green. This was no other than Tarleton the player, who was in such esteem of the Queen for his many witty jests, that it was thought of some he had as much influence with her as any man living. Being so great a favourite, he was allowed to do much as he pleased; and if his wit smacked of some sharpness, few were so unwise as outwardly to take offence at it. Then he had with him so odd a way of saying his drolleries, that he forced many to laugh who liked not being trifled with.

"News, quotha!" replied the jester, after his

comicaled manner; "ay, great news, I warrant. An honest intelligencer of my acquaintance told me, my Lord of Leicester was about going on an embassy to Prester John, with a suit of motley for his wear, and a case of toothpicks to hide in his beard."

"Marry, that is news indeed," answered Leicester, somewhat seriously; "and peradventure it came of the same honest intelligencer who assured me that one Tarleton, a player, stood in great likelihood of being committed to Bridewell for allowing of his wit to run foul of his discretion."

"Nay, o' my life, that is no news!" exclaimed the undaunted jester, "I have heard it this ten year; and the last time it was said in my hearing, there was added to it that my Lord of Leicester might have taken offence at the merry player, only the generousness of his nature put him above such ungraciousness."

"I tell thee what, Master Tarleton," said the Earl, taking the other's humour very pleasantly, "there seemeth to be what learned mediciners call sympathy, in the effects of thy wit—for the weapon that makes the wound can as readily perform the cure."

"O' my life, yes, an' it please you, my lord," replied the jester, making of a mock doleful face exceeding ludicrous. "But my curing hath in it more of the cook than the chirurgeon—for it

seemeth to be ever a getting me into a famous pickle." Thereupon there was a manifest sign of laughing in every face that stood within ear-shot.

"Peradventure that accounteth for the attic saltiness of thy jests," observed Sir Philip Sydney.

"Ay, and if he selleth his wit he must needs be a salt-cellar," added Lord Buckhurst.

"Troth, then, let those who are below the salt look to their manners," said Master Tarleton.

"But touching this conceit of the salt, if it is so, I shall be forced to keep me a respectful distance, else will every lewd fellow be taking a pinch of me with which to savour his porridge."

"Then will he have more wit in his porridge than ever he had in his head," said Leicester, good humouredly. "Take such pinches as lovingly as thou canst, Master Jester, for methinks 'tis this very saltness which keepeth thy wit so long good."

"I promise you," replied Master Tarleton. "But peradventure too much of that savour is like to get me the reputation of a dry wit."

"Nay, before thou canst be properly dried, thou must stand a good hanging," rejoined the Earl, with a laugh, in which all joined.

"O' my life, I would as soon be put to the rack at once," said the jester, "and, in truth, I protest against being used so piggishly."

"Truly, thou art hard to please!" rejoined the Earl, and then graciously taking his farewell of the

Countess and her party, he sauntered along on his way to the Queen's chamber. The courtiers thronged to pay their respects, and commanders, prelates, judges, and other dignitaries, seemed all alike anxious to gain his attention. Some were petitioners for his influence, others came to thank him for some favour conferred, and to all he was alike courteous:—listening patiently, and answering graciously; and as he went, took with him the good wishes of those he left behind. Spying the beautiful Lady Rich, encircled by her usual throng of admirers, he quickly made his way to her side, and soon proved himself the most accomplished gallant of them all. The compliments of others were insipid, in comparison with such as he offered, and the lovely object of them appeared to appreciate the distinction, for he received her most winning smiles.

“Many take me to be of some wealth,” observed he to her, in that resistless sweet fashion he was so famed for; “but when I make comparisons, I cannot help thinking myself in a very monstrous poverty. It is long since I have beheld the poorness of my state, and envied some their greater fortune; yet I can say, in all honesty, were I Rich now, I should be rich indeed.”

“Truly, I know not who should thank you most for that pretty speech of yours, my lord or myself,”

replied the beautiful creature, with one of her exquisitest looks.

“ I protest 'tis a very delicate choice conceit,” said Sir Christopher Hatton, with his customary elegance of manner, as he raised a gold pouncet box to his nose; “ infinitely worthy of my Lord of Leicester, his extreme sufficiency of wit; and absolutely corresponding with my Lady Rich, her rare prodigalness of merit.” Whilst the young gallants around were endeavouring to impress this fine sentence on their memories, Tarleton, the jester, approached, and spying of Sir Christopher Hatton, he suddenly turned round and advanced backwards towards him, with every sign of a most serious courtesy, making a profusion of bows to a half blind old courtier in the distance, whereof the consequence was, he presently stumbled against Sir Christopher, and trod on his toes. Now, if anything would ruffle a man's temper, methinks it should be when a young man, endeavouring to make himself excessively agreeable to the loveliest woman of her age, one should be trod upon so awkwardly, and tread with some pain on the feet. All expected Sir Christopher to be furiously ruffled; but the accomplished courtier smiled upon the Queen's jester,—turned round with a grave indifferent countenance, as if he had done what there is but too much to be attended—and with a most winning

graciousness apologized for having been in his way.

"Nay, I hope I have not hurt you, sweet Sir Christopher!" exclaimed the merry player; "I was but paying of a proper courtesy to my Lord Bumble, and could not guess your worship was so nigh."

"I return you a bountiful load of thankfulness for the wonderful friendliness of your enquiries, worthy Master Tarleton," replied the text-book of compliment; "I will entomb such preciousness in my heart. Let your excess of goodness be gratified by the conviction I am in no way hurt."

"O' my life, I did think I trod on your toes somewhat heavily," said the jester, with extreme seriousness.

"Toes, worthy Master Tarleton," added the mirror of courtesy, with one of his blandest smiles, "belong only to vulgar persons. A gentleman hath no such pedal appurtenances. It may be said of such a one that he hath a handsome foot," continued he, looking at, and moving one of his feet into the gracefullest positions; "but to say he hath feet, is no sort of phrase for the politer sort; and toes are altogether banished from courtly language."

"Nay, if you are for depriving me of my toes, I must e'en take to my heels," answered the other, and thereupon made off from the circle with all speed.

In the meantime, the Earl of Leicester had whispered a quick succession of the delicatest flatteries into the ear of the smiling beauty he was addressing, which she seemed to receive, more as a homage long usage had accustomed her to, than from any particular excess of vanity in her nature. Thence he went to other lovely dames, where it was evident he was no less welcome ; and finally, departed to the Queen's chamber, beyond all contradiction the most admired, the most courted, and the most honoured of all the gallant company assembled in that goodly chamber.

It was evening of the same day, when in a thick grove, at a bow-shot from the palace, a gallant, in a large horseman's cloak and a broad slouched hat, which completely concealed him from observation, was seen walking from tree to tree, backwards and forwards ; sometimes whistling, sometimes humming a tune, but continually looking in one particular direction, as if he was in expectation of some person coming that way. Anon, he would grow impatient, and utter something that smacked of an oath : then he would wrap his cloak closer round him, lean against a tree, and amuse himself awhile by digging of his heels into the soil. In these pursuits he had been engaged for some length of time, when he became aware of the approach of some person, disguised after a like fashion as himself. It was evident, these were the same two persons that

had stood together under the shadow upon the terrace of Kenilworth Castle. They exhibited a similar caution, and they behaved with a like mystery.

"What news?" enquired the new comer, in a low voice; "hast secured the prize? Hast not let her slip through thy fingers a second time?"

"Never was prize so secure, my lord," answered the other.

"Good! Exceeding good!" exclaimed the noble, as if with a wonderful excess of gratification.

"The former plot failed not from any lack of cunning in the planning," added his companion; "I was baulked of my success, just when I had made secure of it—a murrain on the pitiful fools who were so meddlesome! But, in this instance, fortune hath been more kind; and, though not without exceeding painstaking, I have been free from all possibility of any such pestilent interference."

"Then make sure, fortune shall be thy friend from this time forward," replied the one addressed as my lord. "But art sure none know into whose hands she hath fallen!"

"They could not have the slightest guess of it, I have managed matters so well," answered the other. "None saw her taken, none know where she is gone; and I have given her in charge to one, who is too perfect in her lesson, to allow of her pri-

soner's having knowledge of at whose suit she hath been arrested."

"I approve thy discretion infinitely," observed the nobleman; "I would not be known in the business, on any account, either to her or any other. But how doth she look, and how takes she her sudden removal from her friends?"

"'Tis beyond all art of mine to express her looks, my lord," replied his associate; "nought but your own eyes can do her exquisite perfections justice. Beautiful as she was, she hath made such progress in comeliness, that her present appearance putteth clean out of memory the graces she was then possessed of."

"O' my life, then she must be a most rare creature," exclaimed the other delightedly.

"Truly, she is, my lord, and were I in any way richer than I am, I would wager a dozen marks you will readily acknowledge on beholding her, there lives not her peer in this world."

"Well, here is something for thy diligence," said his companion, giving him a well filled purse, which he took very readily. "But 'tis only a token of what shall follow, find I the original to come up to thy limning."

"Would I were as sure of all other things," exclaimed the other. "But I pray you take good speed in your coming, for she hath been made so curious about you, that if you come not straight,

I know not what her impatience may lead her to."

"Be sure the first moment I can without suspicion absent myself from court, I will fly like a hawk," replied the noble. "But in the mean while let her lack nothing by way of amusement to make her content with her condition. The players may be had to entertain her, or any other pastime she is likely to take pleasure in. Spare neither expense nor trouble. Have ever ready such variety of enjoyments that she can get tired of none; and so possess no time to reflect on any other matter, save the bountifulness of the provider."

"It shall be done, my lord, without delay."

"And mark me," continued his companion.

"Ay, my lord," answered the other.

"Let Mistress Crupper take proper heed that this sweet angel of mine firmly believeth herself to be amongst persons of worship. Let her manners be in accordance with her assumed station, at the same time that in every point she behaveth with the most delicate respect to her fair prisoner."

"I have already so ordered it," replied his associate; "and Moll knoweth her own interests too well to mar them by any misbehaving. I do assure you, my lord, she playeth her part in the choicest fashion—never a lady in the land could do it better."

"Provided that be the case, she shall have a

suitable reward," said the nobleman. "But I must be gone. Haste back, and keep her in continual impatience of my coming. But above all things be cautious my name be not dropped on any consideration, nor ought done which might in any manner point to me as holding the slightest share in such proceedings."

"Rely on it, my lord," answered his companion, and so saying both departed their several ways, the one chuckling at the weight of the purse, which had rewarded his infamous proceedings, and the other congratulating himself on the apparent success of his villainous agent.

CHAPTER V.

I have been readie at your hand
 To grant whatever you might crave,
 I have both waged life and land
 Your love and good will for to have.
 I bought thee kerchers to thy head
 That were wrought fine and gallantly,
 I kept thee booth at boord and bed,
 Which cost my purse well favouredly.
 I bought thee peticotes of the best,
 The cloth as fine as might be;
 I gave thee jewels for thy chest,
 And all this cost I spent on thee.
 BALLAD OF LADIE GREENSLEEVES.

Thou art a shameless villain !
 A thing out of the overcharge of nature :
 Sent like a thick cloud to disperse a plague
 Upon weak catching women ! Such a tyrant
 That for his lust would sell away his subjects,
 Ay, all his Heaven hereafter.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MABEL was left in as bad hands as it could be possible for her to fall into. It is a question whether so vile a pair could elsewhere have been met with—a matter of huge congratulation to all virtuous minds. These two were thoroughly heartless, because thoroughly selfish—lost to all sense of shame from being deaf to every murmur of conscience—careless of report, knowing they had no character to lose, and wishing only to live, out of

extreme disinclination to die. They had been in companionship with each other for years, believing such villainy as they possessed would only be tolerated by those who were most familiar with it; but their bad passions were ever breaking forth, and it appeared as if they were allowed to live the better to remind each other of the monstrous baseness of their behaviour.

All that such wretches could do, aided by the most consummate hypocrisy, and with every help unbounded wealth could procure, was essayed to render the pure mind of the poor foundling accessible to the villainy that had been devised against her. Turn where she would, her eyes met images of voluptuousness—and at all times her ears were invaded with meanings in opposition to all honourable notions; but the extreme craft of this, overthrew itself. The mind of the gentle Mabel was so essentially pure, that although it would admit readily every image of beauty, such characters came there completely divested of ought of an objectionable shape, and her nature was so perfectly innocent, that indelicacy of any sort was to her a foreign language, which she heard but could not understand. Whereof the consequence was she remained despite of all this great expenditure of subtlety, as chaste in heart as the day she first entered those polluted walls.

If anything could lead a woman from her own

integrity, the incense which was continually being offered to her vanity, in artful praises of her person, and in the constantly varying costliness of its decorations, might have sufficed ; but the vanity of the poor foundling seemed so remotely seated, that this precious artillery never touched it. She took the flattery as said out of goodness ; and wore the apparel as sent out of kindness.

Many days had passed and Mabel still remained unconscious of her danger, and in less anxiousness concerning of the old knight and the good dame, than she was at first, because her assumed friend, the fictitious Lady Comfit, had assured her she had informed them of her safety and comfort. Her only desire was that the youthful sleeper, who had got himself so roughly used for her sake, might not have been much hurt, and that she should be allowed some early opportunity of thanking him for his extreme readiness to help her in her need. She was rarely left alone, and scarce a moment was allowed her for reflection : and the conversation of her crafty companion kept her in a constant state of marvel, admiration, and curiousness concerning of the princely gentleman who had, as she thought, taken such strange means to shew his love for her. One day, as it were by accident, she had been left by herself, and naturally fell to musing on the mystery of those transactions in which she had been made so prominent a feature. She sat clothed in all the splen-

dour of Venice and Milan—and it might be truly said her beauty more became her tiring than her tiring improved her beauty—her arm rested on the side of the richly carved chair, with the full sleeve falling back disclosing its perfect whiteness and symmetry, clasped by a bracelet of purest gold and jewels, and her fair face was supported by her hand, of which the delicate fingers were half lost in the meshes of her glossy hair. Her radiant eyes were fixed upon the fresh rushes at her feet, but their long silken lashes gave so soft an expression to the deep sweet thoughtfulness of her exquisite countenance, that it is doubtful their full gaze could have appeared more admirable.

Thus she thought over the recent events, bewildered with their strangeness, and perplexed as to their purport, till she was suddenly startled from her reverie.

“Heavens ! how exquisitely beautiful !” exclaimed a deep-toned voice ; and looking up, to her exceeding astonishment, she observed a tall person, enveloped in a huge cloak, and his head covered with a broad beaver hat, consequently she could see of him nothing but his face, which seemed nobly featured, and the eyes lustrous with a very passionate adoration. She had scarce had a moment for thinking who this stranger could be, and what he wanted, when the cloak and hat fell at his feet, and she beheld a stately figure, clad in such magni-

ficence as she had had no imagination of. The delicatest white silk, daintily embroidered with gold, formed his hose; and his doublet was of a light pink, fancifully ornamented with the choicest pearls, having the sleeves quaintly trimmed and slashed with amber satin, like unto the round full part of his trunks. His ribbon garters and shoe roses were of a corresponding costliness; and as some sign of his nobility, he wore the order of the garter round his leg, and a St. George gold chain, of the costliest character, pendant from his neck.

It might be imagined, that before such excessive splendour the poor foundling would have been somewhat abashed, and that her gentle nature would have sunk before the ardour of his gaze; but this was far from the case. The look, the manner, the appearance of the stranger, convinced her that he was no other than her princely lover, of whom she had heard so much; and the only sign she gave of his presence was rising from her seat the moment his nobility stood confessed. No royal queen could ever have received the homage of her courtiers with a truer majesty, than did the gentle Mabel stand before the enamoured glances of this magnificent noble.

“Nay, I beseech thee, do not stir!” murmured he, in a most passionate gallant manner, as he took her hand, and pressed it tenderly in his own. “I regret having disturbed such a miracle of loveliness,

and yet I could not, had I strove ever so, have refrained from expressing in some measure the intenseness of my admiration. Much as I had heard of thy marvellous beauty, and deeply as I had been impressed with the glimpse I had of it in the gardens of Kenilworth, I was totally unprepared for such ravishing perfections as I beheld when, unnoticed, I softly entered this chamber. He who held the apple when the three goddesses disclosed their rival graces to his admiring eyes, could have seen, in all their moving loveliness, nought half so worthy of pre-eminence as then met my wondering and most enamoured gaze."

"My lord, for such I believe you are styled," replied Mabel, with a simple courtesy that became her better than all art of compliment; "you are pleased to say this, as you have been pleased to shew me other signs of a like civilness in you; and for these, believe me, I am as truly grateful as ever heart was."

"O' my life, it delighteth me infinitely to hear thee express thyself so well disposed towards me," answered her companion, rapturously kissing of her fair hand. "But what I have done is nought to what the greatness of my love shall lead me to. But prythee tell me the happy subject of thy deep study."

"Indeed it was no other than yourself, my lord," answered the poor foundling very readily.

"How proud am I of having so rare a student!" exclaimed the other, looking fondly in her face, and pressing her hands with a similar affectionateness. "How dost like the volume? wilt get it by heart?"

"In my then thinking, I was seeking the cause for my having been put by you in this place," answered Mabel.

"The cause, my sweet life!" cried the gallant, as if in some extreme astonishment; "why, what else cause can there be than thy most exquisite self? Look on those lustrous eyes, observe that delicate cheek, regard that eloquent and delicious mouth, or take the perfectness of those matchless features and peerless shape combined, and note if they contain not such prodigal cause of love as might warrant any such behaviour in a lover, as that I have been forced to take advantage of."

"Methinks, my lord, love might be better shewn," observed the gentle foundling.

"In some cases, doubtless," replied her companion; "but not where the lover is so circumstanced as am I. I have essayed in all manner of things thou shouldst meet such respect as true love delighteth to shew. Thy tiring is of the noblest, thy lodging the most sumptuous that could be had, and thy fare the delicatest that wealth and skill could unite in producing. Thou hast been waited on as became the guest of a prince; and so gallantly

entertained as might be shewn to an enthroned queen !”

“ Truly I have, and I thank you right heartily, my lord—yet——”

“ Dost lack anything? Hast any desire? Has aught proper been forgotten?” continued the noble, with increasing earnestness.

“ Indeed no, I have store of things of every sort, —but——”

“ Dost not like the dwelling? thou shalt be removed to a palace,” added her companion, without allowing her to finish her sentence. “ Dost not approve of thy tiring, all Italy shall be searched for costlier stuffs? Hast fault to find with thy attendants, thou shalt have such honourable persons as thou cannot help approving of? or is anything amiss with thy fare, the skilfullest cooks, and the daintiest cates shall be fetched from all parts of Christendom, to give thee better entertainment?”

“ Truly there is no need,” she replied; “ methinks I should be wondrous discontent seemed I not satisfied with the bountiful great splendour with which I am surrounded; still there is one thing I would have you do, which surely you cannot avoid doing, if you have for me the exceeding love you have just expressed.”

“ Name it,” said her companion, in an impassioned manner. “ If it taketh up my whole fortune —which is considered to be in some excess—or re-

quireth all my influence—which is said to be second to none in the kingdom—whatever thou dost require shall be done on the instant.”

“Return me to my friends,” answered Mabel.

“What!” exclaimed the gallant, evidently having expected from her something very different, “wouldst have me, ere I have scarce had an hour’s acquaintance with so inestimable a treasure, to send it away where perchance I may never see it again.”

“I doubt not you could see me at all proper times, with worthy Sir Thomas Lucy’s permission,” said the poor foundling.

“Believe me, my dear life, there is no possibility of such a thing, else should I have preferred doing so,” observed her companion, with a famous earnestness. “There is such absolute reason for what has been done, as would convince any, were I allowed to say it; but at present I must needs be dumb on the matter. Give me but fair trial, and if, after some time, thou shouldst desire again to see thy friends, thou shalt go, and willingly.”

“I thank you for that assurance, my lord,” replied Mabel, somewhat comforted. “In very truth I am most anxious to return home, with as little tarrying as possible, and you will make me more bound to you, by helping me in my wish, than could you by detaining me, though you furnished my stay with the honourablest entertainment in your power.”

"I beseech thee, my fair queen, move me not to it at this present," continued her noble gallant, very passionately. "Thou knowest not what great travail hath been mine for thy sweet sake, since I first had glimpse of thy enchanting graces. Allow me some solace after my so long trouble; believe me night or day hath been one continual darkness with me, in which my hopes would appear like stars, in bright assurance the sunrise of my happiness was nigh at hand; and yet it came not, till my heart was nigh upon being weary with so much longing. Nought but the remembrance of those dazzling beauties, as they came upon me, like a sudden flash of heaven to a poor heathen, kept me in countenance with myself; for that remembrance brought with it such good warrant of gentle treatment, of excellent kind sympathy, and of generous sweet affection, as a nature well disposed to reward the infinite sufferings of unbounded love, is ever possessed of. Let it not be I have rested on a broken reed."

"I should be loath to deal harshly with you, my lord," replied the simple foundling; "nor am I in any way so given towards any one. Yet I see not I could give you any relief stayed I here ever so."

"Be assured, sweetest, nothing is so easy," observed her companion, gazing on her as enrapturedly as though he had put his whole heart into a glance. "Let those entrancing eyes

discourse with mine the true language they were made to express, till volumes of loving meaning beam in every look ; twine those delicate arms around me as I would use mine own, till heart throb fondly against heart in natural unison, and every nerve throughout our enamoured natures thrill with the same soft ecstasy—and bring me hither those delicious lips that make the ruby pale, and look more tempting than the ripest ruddiest cherry, to refresh my thirsty soul with the precious rapturous, exquisite sweet balm with which they are bedewed.”

“ Indeed, my lord, I —— ”

“ Behold me here, thy poor petitioner,” continued the enamoured nobleman, kneeling on one knee at the feet of the gentle Mabel, with such a look and with such a manner few women could have resisted. “ Note to how mean a strait my greatness is reduced—see the equal of princes, the very humblest of slaves. Dear, excellent fair creature ! My whole being is bound up in the gaining of thy most choice affections. Shew me some sign—a smile, a word, a look—my case is not entirely desperate, and I will fill the air thou makest holy with thy presence, with my unceasing love and very earnest thankfulness.”

Thus proceeded this accomplished gallant with the innocent gentle Mabel—now appealing to her sympathies, — now endeavouring to awaken her

pride—a moment after striving with equal earnestness to excite her vanity, and anon straining every nerve to move her ambition : and thus he continued with the most passionate assiduity for several days, breathing into her ear the most delicate flattery, and exhausting every source of entertainment likely to dazzle or captivate an inexperienced tender woman. Save with her sympathies he scarce made any advance, which made him marvel infinitely, for he was the most irresistible lover that ever sought a fair lady's affections, and had achieved more triumphs over the sex than had any half dozen of his acquaintance. There was not a turn of their hearts with which he seemed not familiar, and he appeared to know the cunningest baits to draw up their desires. But this exceeding knowledge was derived from the court circles, or those who took after them in manner, where such gifts as he possessed could scarce fail of having a most absolute influence. The mere fine ladies, or those eager to be thought so, readily gave way to his many fascinations, but the poor foundling was of a very different sort. There was in her nature a marvellous combination of simplicity and pride—the one kept her ignorant of the treachery of her companion—the other received his delusive attentions as though they were her just right and title. Something of this she had shewn when in company with Sir Valentine, when the modesty of her ap-

parel seemed out of place with the air of graceful dignity and easy self-possession with which she shared in the court-like converse of the young knight;—but now, clothed in all the delicate splendour of the times, she listened to the dangerous homage of her princely gallant, with a manner so noble as must have convinced any spectator she took them more as proper respect than as matter for gratification.

Her noble lover's ecstasies availed him nothing—the fondness of his behaviour and discourse made as little impression—but his unceasing efforts to afford her by the most lavish expenditure, signs of the unbounded estimation in which she was held by him, were accepted with gratitude; and the seeming terribleness of his sufferings when her behaviour put him into a despairing mood, were regarded with a natural sympathy. Here she was in some danger, for there is no such nigh relations to love as gratitude and pity.

In the mean while William Shakspeare having at last met with Sir Valentine, instant proceedings were taken to endeavour to trace out the place to which the gentle Mabel had been carried. Nothing could exceed the manner in which the young knight was moved at the relation of his fair mistress's abduction. All the chivalry of his nature was up in arms in a moment, and he was for chasing the villains to the uttermost corners of the earth. With

the feelings with which he had regarded her many moving graces, so that she had become to him the sovereign of his heart's wishes, he felt bound by every principle of knighthood to peril life and limb in her service, and mounting his palfrey he rode in every direction to find some traces of her flight. He was at last so fortunate as to meet with the man elsewhere spoken of, who had seen her borne past him, and had watched her direction, whilst he could keep her in sight; and with this intelligence he sat off as soon as he could from his kinsman's house, accompanied only by his favourite companion, the youthful Shakspeare riding of a grey gelding, who was quite as eager as himself to go on such an errand.

The feelings of these two were as different as their different natures could make them. The young knight in the fresh bloom of his manhood, saw beauty only as it was expected a soldier should see it—as something worthy of being honoured by the honourablest achievements. The young student in the first soft glow of youth, saw beauty only as in such cases it might be seen of a student—as something to worship at a humble distance with the purest and noblest thoughts. The one believing it to be his duty, would have boldly proclaimed the name of Mabel as first in his esteem wherever he went,—the other feeling it to be his nature, would have thought it sacrilege to have mentioned her

name in idle company, although his estimation of her was not a whit less than was that of his companion.

They proceeded on in the course directed, at all reasonable opportunities Sir Valentine entertaining of his young associate with a very gallant discourse concerning the doings of certain famous knights in love with notable fair ladies, and ever and anon seasoning it with divers pretty passages out of Petrarcha, his sonnets of love, to which the youthful poet would seriously incline his ear, get explained to him whatever he knew not the meaning of, and observe, question, and reply upon all he heard, with such sprightliness of wit and ingenuity of learning, as both astonished and delighted his fellow traveller.

They passed all manner of pleasant mansions, with excellent parks of deer, and beheld the country round shewing a thousand signs of the decay of summer, yet still possessing so much of greenness as gave it a semely aspect. Occasionally, they would meet with a brave company going a hawking, each with a favourite bird on the wrist, and riding on an ambling palfrey, accompanied by attendants carrying of other hawks together, perched in a circle, all hooded in their fairest gesses and Milan bells, ready to be cast off at a moment's notice. Anon, they would hear the loud "Soho!" of some eager huntsman, and they would rein in their steeds awhile to

see the goodly sight of the hounds in full chase, and the gallant assemblage of men and horses speeding after them over hedge, and ditch, hill, and hollow, with some a tumbling in this place, others leaping in that, here a steed galloping without his rider, and there a rider running to catch his steed : and a little way further, they would come upon divers honest anglers, pursuing of their delicate sport by the sedgy margin of the brook, to the manifest catching of sundry luce, greyling, perch, bream, and dace, then uselessly flapping of their tails in the angler's basket.

The partridges hid their heads among the stubble—the snipe lurked unseen in the water-courses—the wild-ducks floated in flocks over the broad ponds and marshy lakes, and the great heron lay in her haunt, amid the thick reeds of the same waters. On a branch of a withered old tree upon the banks, the gaudy kingfisher was making a choice repast, and in his hole deep in the sandy soil beneath, the greedy otter was busying himself with a like occupation. Great companies of small birds seemed pursuing of each other over the open fields, and far over head the noisy rooks gathered their black bands to ravage the distant country. As the travellers skirted a wood, they observed the nimble conies running into their holes, or a stray leveret rushing hither and thither, without knowing where, scared by the sound of the horses feet. Presently,

a young pigeon was noticed plying of her wings with the desperate eagerness of despair, as she left the wood for the open country; but a murderous hawk followed in her track, and as she sank panting with agony behind a tree, he swept down upon her swifter than the wind, and in the same minute fixed his sharp talons in her heart.

Having from many of the labouring country-people continued, as they proceeded, to gain such intelligence as still led them on, they had gone a famous distance, but full of ardour to accomplish their adventure, they pushed forward, regardless of all else, save the rescue of the gentle Mabel. It so happened, that at last, to their constant enquiries, nothing profitable was gained. No one had seen any such persons as were described to them. Finding this to be the case, they retraced their steps towards the place where they obtained the latest information, with the idea, that if any house lay convenient, it was probable there she had been carried. They now rode slowly, and took close scrutiny of the neighbourhood. After so doing for some time, they spied a fair house down in a hollow, almost hid up with trees, and completely surrounded with a high wall. Within less than a quarter of a mile of it was a small village, of some half-dozen houses, most distinguishable of which was the open smithy, the little inn, and a shop for the sale of all manner of things needed in such a

place. It was thought advisable to make for this village at once, as being the likeliest spot to gain the necessary intelligence, and where they could get refreshments for themselves and beasts, whilst they made their enquiries.

As they rode into the yard, William Shakspeare caught a glimpse of a man, in whose unpleasing features he immediately recognised the villain who had struck him when he seized his companion. The fellow saw not who had observed him, for he was busy playing at bowls under a shed with divers other persons. The youthful poet resolved on saying nothing of this discovery till a more fitting opportunity presented itself, therefore quietly followed the example of the young knight, in dismounting, giving his palfrey in charge to the landlord, and entering the inn. Upon sitting himself in a chamber to which he and Sir Valentine were shewn, he observed a decent sort of man, of a middle age, seated on a settle, with a book in his hand, and a jug of ale on the table before him. As William Shakspeare took himself to make a hearty meal of what was set before him, he gave another glance at the person with the book, and another after that, and he still thought, as he had imagined when he first came into the room, that the countenance was familiar to him. Sir Valentine, finding a stranger with them, was pondering with himself whether he should abstain from seeming curious,

which might perchance defeat his object, or attempt cautiously to make the necessary enquiries of this very person. However, it so fell out, that the stranger raised his eyes from the book, on which he seemed as intent as though he were the most scholarly person that had ever lived, and thereupon encountered the somewhat earnest gaze of the youthful Shakspeare.

"Why, surely?" exclaimed the stranger, in a pleased surprise—"yes, it must be. O' my life, 'tis either Will Shakspeare or his ghost."

"'Tis myself, worthy Master Burbage," replied the young poet, proceeding quickly to take the proffered hand of the father of his friend and school-fellow.

"Glad to see thee, by'r lady!" said the other, giving his young acquaintance a hearty shake of the hand.

"And how do thy excellent parents—and how is Dick, my son—and how are all my honest friends at Stratford?" The youthful Shakspeare quickly gave him the intelligence he required; Sir Valentine remaining silent, yet glad they were known to each other.

"But what hath brought you here, worthy Master Burbage?" enquired the young poet at last.

"Ey, what, indeed!" replied the player, somewhat dolefully. "'Sprecious! I would I had never come nigh the place. Methinks I cannot help

getting myself into a famous trouble on account of it, which may spoil my fortune ever after."

"Alack, that is woeful news!" observed William Shakspeare. "But, I pray you, tell me how that is so like to be?"

"Why, this is it," answered Master Burbage: "I have been sent down with my company to play stage plays and interludes for the entertainment of some ladies living in a house hard by."

"I pray you, tell me if the fellow in green, now playing at bowls, belongeth to that house?" enquired the young poet, very earnestly.

"Out of all doubt, he doth," replied the player. "He is the serving man of my Lady Arabella Comfit."

"The house hath an ancient look with it, and lieth hid among trees somewhat to the left of this?" observed his youthful friend; and at hearing this, Sir Valentine listened with a very singular curiosity.

"Ay, that is the place," said Master Burbage, a little impatiently. "Now, we have been ordered to get ourselves perfect in a new play by the next day after to-morrow at noon, to play before this noble lady and her friends, at her own house; and as we are all intent upon studying our parts, a certain boy of our company who playeth principal woman, hath the ill hap to be taken with a desperate illness; and we know not what to do on account of it, for

we cannot play without him; and it is impossible for him to assist us in any manner, he is in so bad a state."

William Shakspeare mused on this intelligence for some minutes, then asked sundry questions concerning the part the sick boy was to have played, which Master Burbage shewed him by the book he had in his hand; and afterwards, both to the surprise of Sir Valentine and the other, offered, on condition Master Burbage should pass off himself and his companion as of his company, he would himself diligently essay the playing the part the sick boy ought to have played. Drowning men catch at straws; and just so eagerly did Master Burbage avail himself of this offer — promised what was required, and, moreover, offered to give the volunteer such instructions in the playing of the part as might be necessary for him to know. Upon the first opportunity, William Shakspeare told Sir Valentine his reasons for having done as he had; with the which the latter was so greatly satisfied, that he became a player on the sudden, with as much willingness as he would have entered a battle field.

CHAPTER VI.

Come, I'll be out of this ague,
 For to live thus is not indeed to live ;
 It is a mockery and abuse of life ;
 I will not henceforth save myself by halves ;
 Lose all or nothing.

WEBSTER.

Paul. Thou shalt not go in liberty to thy grave,
 For one night a sultana is my slave.

Mustapha. A terrible little tyranness.

MASSINGER.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,
 Yet in the brest of hire virginitee
 There was enclosed sad and ripe corage.

CHAUCER.

Then, my good girls, be more than woman, wise ;
 At least be more than I was ; and be sure
 You credit anything the light gives light to,
 Before a man. Rather believe the sea
 Weeps for the ruined merchant when he roars ;
 Rather the wind courts but the pregnant sails,
 When the strong cordage cracks ; rather the sun
 Comes but to kiss the fruit in wealthy autumn
 When all falls blasted.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MASTER BURBAGE was delighted at a rehearsal at finding not only how well his young friend became his petticoats, but how truly and gracefully he enacted the different scenes in which he was to play. Certes William Shakspeare was not a player for the first time, as witness his early playing of Gammer Gurton's Needle, and divers other in-

terludes with his schoolfellows Green, Burbage, Hemings, and Condell; but he felt there was a monstrous difference betwixt doing of such things in the manner of school-boys, for their own amusement only, and attempting it in the fashion of real players for the entertainment of a gallant company. But by the aid of Master Burbage he got over much of the difficulty.

The play appeared cunningly writ with no other end than to lead to the undoing of the gentle Mabel. At least so thought Sir Valentine and his youthful friend; and it was agreed between them the young knight should play one of the minor characters in the which there was little to say or do, but it gave excellent opportunity of Sir Valentine's noting who were of the company, and if such person as they expected should be among them, it afforded a mean for her recognising him, and so knowing friends were near. This was done in case she should not know again the features of William Shakspeare, as he thought it possible she might not. There was another incident in the plot, but this the young player kept to himself.

The time arrived, and the players were ready. Master Burbage was encouraging his youthful companion with great store of praise, who, dressed in feminine apparel, was to personate a young country girl. In the first scene a noble lover appears, acquainting his confidant how he had seen

such perfection in womanhood, as he must sigh his heart away for, was he not allowed her sweet society to ease his pain, whereupon in pity of his lord's dolorous moan, the other is made to offer to carry her off on the instant, to the which, seeing no other way of having her, the passionate lover gives his reluctant consent. Then followed an attempt to carry off the damsel, with her rescue by the interference of her friends. Here the young player came upon the stage, which was one end of a large chamber, the players coming in by a door at each side. At the other end he observed four persons sitting, but to his amazement they were all masked, as persons of quality often were. The first near him was a lady of a most graceful figure, dressed in as great magnificence as he had seen Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth. The next was a gallant, in apparel equally gorgeous, who occasionally turned from the lady to speak to another gallant less nobly clad, sitting on the other side of him, and beyond him was another lady very richly garmented, but in no comparison with the first.

Whether the lady so bountifully attired was the fair creature of whom they were in search he had no means of knowing, for she gave no sign of recognition at his appearance. When Sir Valentine came on the stage she started somewhat, and asked some questions of her companion, and appeared to take greater interest in the play. Then was enacted her

being carried off from her home, to the house of a kinswoman to the noble gallant's confidante. Here the country maid was seen clothed in the richest stuffs and jewels, and paid all manner of honourable attentions. At the sight of Sir Valentine, again the youthful lady gazed on him with more earnestness than she did before, and her interest in the play evidently grew deeper and deeper. After this the princely lover entered, and with the fondest rhetoric implored the love of the seeming Mabel, till he so moved her, as it appeared, she was content to promise him all manner of happiness, to his infinite contentation. To end all, there was to be a soliloquy to be spoken by the heroine, in which she was to applaud herself to the echo for her generosity in behalf of a gentleman who had shewn towards her such extreme honour, and vow to be his true love, and his alone ever after, till death should put asunder their mutual loving hearts.

This the players considered the difficultest passage of the whole, to be done with proper effect. As yet their new companion had conducted himself beyond their expectations; but this long soliloquy was a difficult part for the ablest; and fears were entertained he might lose himself in it, and so break down. To prevent this as much as possible, Master Burbage stationed himself at one of the open doors, so as not to be in sight of the audience,

to prompt him in case he was at a loss. There was the fictitious Mabel, in all the splendour of her supposed greatness, and there stood the anxious prompter with book in hand, hoping with all his might the play would end as well as it had proceeded. The prompter gave the cue, but to his extreme astonishment the young player spoke words clean different. The prompter in an agony of dread that all would be marred, gave out the cue again somewhat louder, but still the young player proceeded with a speech as opposite to that he ought to have said as two different things could be. Horror struck, the poor player cast down his book, and began pulling of his hair, kicking the ground, and muttering imprecations against the author of his ruin, as he imagined the youthful Shakspeare to be, that all the players came marvelling to see what had produced such strange effects.

But if Master Burbage was so moved, not less so was the lady nighest to the stage. Her three companions were engaged in earnest converse, without paying the slightest attention to what was passing elsewhere. The intentness of the three to the subject of their converse, did not escape the notice of the young player; and though he suspected the fair deity of his dreams was the lady who paid such unceasing attention to the play, he essayed to have some certain knowledge of it by a device of his own.

Therefore instead of speaking the proper soliloquy, he spoke the following passage, which he had written to say in its place, if circumstances served :—

“ Now with my heart let me hold conference.
This lord, he speaks me fair, he clothes me fine,
He entertains me honourably and well :
But how know I his purport in all this ?
Is it in honesty, is it in respect ?
Doth it mean well or ill, or good or bad ?
His words are cups that brim all o'er with love,
But is there sign of wedding in this cheer ?
Perchance the love he proffers comes to me
In some polluted vessel, that hath been
Lipped by dishonoured maids in wantonness,
Or drained by thoughtless women in their shame ?
These gaudy trappings, are they meant to be
The tire of marriage sent by honest love,
Or the more taudry livery of guilt ?
And all this splendour, all this bounteous state,
This worship, travail, reverence, and respect—
'Tis prodigal, 'tis admirable, 'tis rare,
Most choice, most noble, delicate, and sweet—
But doth it cover any meaner thing ?
A thing so base, so vile, so infamous,
It doth require to be thus thickly gilt
To make the metal take a sterling shape ?
I'll think of this.”

The lady appeared somewhat agitated during the delivery of these passages, and leaned forward in her chair, drinking in every word, evidently with the most intense interest. The young player noticing these signs, and observing too that her com-

panions were still paying no heed to him, proceeded with these words:—

“ Alack, I cannot doubt
These words mean villainy, these garments shame,
This entertainment mischiefs of the worst.
Methinks the very air I breathe, feels thick
With craft and malice, treachery and crime !
And I am here alone—far from all help—
Close watched, well guarded, providently kept.
But hush ! there needs great caution. Not a word,
A sound, a gesture, dare I give to shew
I look suspiciously upon these schemes.
And yet there might be present even here
Friends who would strain their hearts for my escape
Shewed I some sign I would assay their aid.
At least I'll let them see I wear a face
That needs no mask—for I can truly swear
As yet it holds no intercourse with shame.”

In an instant the mask was taken off the lady so deeply interested in the play, and, as the youthful Shakspeare had for some minutes anticipated, he beheld the guileless beautiful countenance of the gentle Mabel, flushed with excitement, and gazing upon him with so imploring anxious a look, it was plain she had felt every word he had uttered. The face was again masked, quite unobserved by her companions. The young player made a sign of recognition, and concluded with these lines:—

“ These friends I'll trust, I know they may be found
Out by the gate that ends the garden wall.
There will I seek them with what speed I may ;

Having assurance, by their means, to 'scape
The living hell that holds me round about ;
And back return to innocence and peace,
An honoured dwelling, and a spotless name."

"Come, sweetest, the play is ended," whispered her noble gallant. Mabel mechanically rose, and accompanied him to her own chamber. Her feelings were in such a state of tumult she dared not speak. She repeated to herself the lines—

"I know they may be found
Out by the gate that ends the garden wall."

as if she would impress them so firmly on her memory there could be no chance of her forgetting them : she also remembered the hint that had been given her to be cautious, but she had been so little accustomed to disguise, that here she somewhat feared for herself. The revulsion of feeling had been so deep, so strong, and so sudden from a sense of security and gratitude to a sense of disgust and abhorrence, that it left her for some minutes so greatly bewildered, she scarce knew what she was about. Presently her lover and herself unmasked. The signs of a disturbed nature so visible in her, he seemed to expect as a natural consequence of his craftily devised play, and he had not the slightest doubt it had produced all the effect he had desired. It was time now, he thought, to follow up his advantage before the simple girl could

have opportunity for reflection, and he made himself ready with the desperate earnestness of a determined profligate to conclude the plot against her, as it had been settled by his companions in iniquity, during the delivery of the concluding soliloquy. He came close to her, and wound his arm fondly round her waist, as she was endeavouring to put her disordered thoughts into something resembling purpose, bringing his face as near to her's as he might, and gazing into her eyes with the most fond and passionate glances.

"My sweet life," murmured he, in such soft thrilling tones as he fancied would be most effective, "We dally with opportunity. The happiness I have so long coveted, and so thoroughly strove to deserve, should now, methinks, be my just reward. Love beckons us to mutual bliss. Hither with me awhile, upon those balmy lips to breathe new life, and taste such joy as the enamoured soul alone can know. Prythee, come this way, my heart!—my queen!—my treasure!" The gentle Mabel allowed herself to be borne unresistingly towards the next chamber, seemingly as if stupified by the fascinating gaze of her licentious companion, who hung over her exquisite countenance as he drew her along like a gloating serpent; but the noble pride of her nature at last made itself manifest, for as she came near the door, on a sudden she burst

from his hold, and retreating back a pace or two, fixed on him a look of such utter scorn as would have crushed a meaner wretch to the earth.

"Thou shameless villain!" exclaimed she, her voice half choked with the fulness of her emotions. "Thou pitiful traitor to all true love and honesty! Dost call this nobleness? Dost style this honour? How darest thou attempt to pass off such baseness for the behaviour of a princely person?"

"Why, how now?" cried the gallant, in real astonishment. "What meaneth this unworthy language, and these terrible indignant looks."

"What mean they?" replied the poor foundling, her lustrous eyes flashing with scorn, and her whole countenance, as he had justly observed, looking terribly indignant. "They mean that thou hast been hugely mistaken in me, as hitherto have I been in thee. I am not of such worthless stuff as thou hast supposed. I did believe thee all thou didst assume, and therefore felt no fear. Thou didst seem honourable. I thought thee so."

"Prythee, let us have no more of this," observed the gallant, impatiently. "I marvel thou shouldst get into so famous a passion about nothing, after having enjoyed at my expense such bounteous entertainment."

"I needed it not—I asked it not," answered Mabel. "It was forced on me under colour of honourable intents; but now I know the baseness

of its ends. I will not be a partaker of it another minute of my life."

"Not so fast, my pretty tyrantess !" exclaimed her companion. "I cannot part with thee so soon, or lessen the splendour of which thou hast so liberally partaken. Nor can I believe thou wouldst play so ill a part as this thou art about. Come, come, sweetest ! this humour becomes thee not at all."

"Away, I am not to be beguiled !" cried the fair foundling, eluding his approaches.

"Nay, 'tis too hard a thing—I cannot think of it," replied the other, standing before the door she sought to make her exit out of. "I must not see my full great pains and cost all come to nought—'tis out of justice, and against all right. Marry, wouldst take thy pleasure and not pay the price !"

"I tell thee once again, I took it, thinking it was honourably given," said Mabel. "Thou didst not mention price, thou talked of honour ! Didst think that I would barter away my own respect to lie in costly lodging, and be clothed in delicate attire ? Take back thy pitiful bribes," continued she, as she tore from her person her jewels, her chains of gold, and sparkling rings, and dashed them at his feet. "I loathe all I have had of thee—I loathe still more the villain who could put them to so base a purpose."

"Ha, dost, indeed !" exclaimed her gallant, his face now assuming some anger. "O' my life, I

will not be so easily thrust aside. I have done what ought to satisfy any reasonable woman. Indeed, I have had more cost and pains taken with thee than with any half dozen others I have fancied; but if fair words will not do with thee foul deeds shall. Thou art so completely in my power that resistness is useless. 'Tis vain struggling. Thou must needs submit."

"Oh, I beseech thee, have some pity!" cried the poor foundling, falling on her knees at his feet with a look so moving, the savagest beast must have been tamed at the sight of it. "Surely, thou meanest not such evil as thou speakest; I cannot think so ill of thee. Thou art, indeed, that princely person I once thought, and knowest and feelest in thy inmost heart, it is no part of nobleness to wrong a poor maid. Let me go in honour from thy house, I'll pray for thee all my days. I'll hold thee ever after a true good friend—a bountiful sweet lord, the very noblest gentleman that breathes. My lord—my worthy lord—my honourable good lord—as God shall pity thee, so pity my poor state!"

She might have implored a stone. The licentious noble, with his looks burning with his dishonest passions, drew her in his arms towards the adjoining chamber, though she clung to his limbs with desperate grasp, and continued with straining eyeballs and hoarse-thick voice, to pray his mercy. As he held her before him, her hands, clutching him

wildly as she was borne along, at one time fell upon the jewelled pommel of his dagger. In a moment the blade was out of its sheath—in the next she had twisted herself free of his grasp, and stood at some distance from him, with one hand striving to stay the throbbing of her heart, and the other, holding out the weapon threateningly before her. The beauty of her countenance was now absolutely sublime. There was in it a lofty grandeur of expression that can scarce be conceived. Her eyes seemed fountains of living lightning, and her beautiful lips appeared to curl with an unutterable sense of outraged majesty no language can give the remotest idea of.

“Touch me at thy peril!” exclaimed she, as audible as her perturbed state would allow. Her companion seemed so completely taken by astonishment, that for a moment he stared at her as if uncertain what to be about. At last he made a movement as if he would approach her, and on the instant, her left arm was pointed towards him as stiffly as though it had been iron whilst her right clutched the dagger a little behind her. She elevated herself to her full height, and threw her head somewhat back, with a look and a manner that shewed a stern determination.

“I warn thee!” muttered the poor foundling, in a terrible earnestness; “if thou dost but come within arm’s length of me to follow up thy villainous

intentions, as Jesu shall save my soul, I'll cleave thy heart in twain!"

The profligate drew back. He dared not battle with the fierce storm he had raised; so saying, he would send to her those who would soon have her out of her tragedy humour, he turned on his heel, to seek the assistance of his vile associates. Mabel, in the same attitude, and with the same look, followed him step by step to the door. When she heard his departing foot, she looked to the fastenings, there were none inside the chamber—she dropped her dagger, and clasped her hands in despair. On a sudden a thought struck her. She ran to the casement and threw it open. It looked into the garden, above which it stood some ten feet. Without a moment's hesitation she leaped out, and finding herself safe when she came to the ground, flew down the garden like an escaped bird. Keeping the wall in view, she came, out of breath, to a door at its extremity. It was partly open. She dashed through it, staggered forward, and fell with a wild hysterical laugh, into the ready arms of Sir Valentine. *

CHAPTER VII.

Forth goeth all the court both most and lest
 To fetch the floures fresh, and braunch and blome—
 And namely hauthorn brought both page and grome
 And than rejoyssen in their great delite :
 Eke ech at other throw the floures bright,
 The primrose, the violete, and the gold,
 With fresh garlants party blew and white.

CHAUCER.

There's not a budding boy or girl, this day
 But is got up, and gone to bring in May.
 A deale of youth, ere this, is come
 Back, and with white-thorn laden home.

HERRICK.

In this our spacious isle I think there is not one
 But he hath heard some talk of him and eke of Little John,
 Of Tuck the merry friar, which many a sermon made
 In praise of Robin Hood, his outlaws, and their trade,
 And of his mistress dear, his loved Marian.

DRAYTON.

Shall the hobby horse be forgot then ?
 The hopeful hobby horse, shall he lie foundered ?

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

THE feeling with which the youthful poet regarded the fair object of his recent adventure, if it could be called love, was very different from the passion which goeth under that name. In fact, it was more a sentiment than a passion—rather the offspring of the intellect than of the affections. It was the first rosy hues of light which ushereth in the sunshine of the soul, producing the fairest

glimpses of heaven, before the atmosphere hath heat enough to warm the blood. Love it was beyond all doubt, but it was that peculiar species which is found only to visit the very young and very imaginative. It is true it hath a natural source, but it is equally undeniable, it dwelleth in the fairy regions of the ideal. Where there is early sign of great intellect, there will also be found a like early sign of deep feeling. The one is supported by the other, fostered, encouraged, and fed by it. Beauty is indeed the air it breathes, but imagination is the soil from which it draws its nourishment. The boy genius is ever the boy lover, and having found some gentle being worthy to be enshrined in the sanctuary of his hopes, he proceeds not only to invest her image with all loveable attributes, but with such loveable behaviour as seemeth most proper for the entertainment of his fantasy.

He finds a spirit rising over his thoughts, which gives them a sort of softened halo, that at some favourable opportunity taketh the shape of song or sonnet delicately fashioned—a sensible adoration—an inspiration beginning and ending in a spiritual heaven of its own. Ideas take to themselves wings, and fly east and west, and north and south, bringing back the riches, rarities, and perfections of the whole globe with which to deck this favoured deity. He ransacks the deepest hollows of the sea—he snatches glory from the shining stars—he makes the

enamelled earth show all her bravest tapestry that he may choose the daintiest piece of all—and far above, beneath, around, and about, where splendour shines, or modest beauty hides, he bears away their gifts, as offerings worthiest of so pure a shrine.

Truly, as hath just been said, this is the love of the cool morning of life, that differeth as much in its nature from the blushing sunrise of youth, as from the noon-tide heats of manhood; and 'like unto that early season of the day, it soon glides into a warmer atmosphere. Love, such as this, will always be found to have no purpose, save the deification of its object, which it loves to worship, rather than worships to love. This way it goeth on, like the silk-worm in its cocoon, only known by the pleasing mantle it weaves around itself; and having at last spent all its energies, it comes forth, some brief space after its labours, as different in character and appearance as any two things can be.

This love, though, let it be remembered, made William Shakspeare a poet, some sign of which, albeit, it must be thought of all judges, one of no particular greatness, may be seen in the simple ballad found by the antiquary in the book of songs, which did so much delight the good old knight and his companions; but it should also be borne in mind, such are ever first efforts. The materials of poetry may lie in prodigal heaps within the brain,

but the fashioning them into the properest shape comes but after many trials. The soliloquy the young poet spoke in the place of the one intended to end the play, deserveth praise only for the readiness with which it was written, and aptness for the occasion which wrought it into existence. It cannot be expected the finish of an experienced writer, or the sufficiency of a mature genius should be found in such things. They should be taken merely for what they appear. Nevertheless, if it be thought the poet was but in his pot-hooks, I doubt not in good time to shew such craft of penmanship in him, as shall be all men's admiration unto the end of time.

Still was he as diligent a student as ever; and never could scholar have more careful teachers than William Shakspeare had in Master Peregrine, the antiquary, and Sir Johan, the chaplain. Ever since the affair of the ballad, each of these two watched till they could find the young student alone, and then they would strive as never they strove before he should profit by their instructions, in the full belief all the whilst, that from *his* teaching alone, the youth had gained all the knowledge he possessed. By their means he obtained such an acquaintance with what was worthiest of note in ancient English literature, and Greek and Latin classic lore, as it was scarce possible he could have obtained by any other means. But about this

time he began more to observe than he had hitherto done. He made comparisons—he judged—he looked into the meanings of things,—he commenced studying the application of words, and he analysed and weighed, and sifted what he read, and what he saw, till he could point out where lay the good and where the bad—how they might be distinguished, and what was the difference between any two particular matters that looked to be alike. This study was not confined to books: he pursued it wherever he went, and found no lack of subjects in the common phenomena of nature. Even a drop of rain was some object for speculation—the shooting of a star, the fructification of a plant, and the falling of a leaf seemed as worthy of enquiry. A storm never rolled over him but the lightening flashed some new meaning into his mind—and he never witnessed the rising of the sun, but with it came some fresh light into his thoughts. As he saw the emmets crowding to and fro among the grass, he would say, “Wherefore is this?” and whilst he watched the builders of the grove making their delicate dwellings in the forked branches of the tree, he would exclaim, ‘How is this done?’ High or low he sent his curious mind seeking intelligence. Nothing escaped him, and to his eager questionings, all things in nature gave him ready answers.

The gentle Mabel he saw not again all this time. He frequented her favourite haunts, but she

was no where visible. Day after day found him stealing among the trees where he had so oft watched her graceful progress, but his anxious gaze was never blessed with the slightest sign of her presence. He changed the time. He took the early morning by the hand, and roamed the park before the hind had left his bed of rushes; but though nature rose wooingly to meet his glance, he looked upon her graces only as a sort of faint cold picturing of those he desired to meet in all their living freshness in a much fairer original. He made himself familiar with the noon, and still did nature court him with her lovingest looks, and still did she receive such attentions as proved she was merely regarded as the ambassador of the fair sovereign of his thoughts. And he lingered out the hours with twilight, till she was lost in the embraces of the shadowy eve, but with no other result than had accompanied his earlier seeking. Thus passed the winter, till the frost was gone, the hearth-side tales forgotten, the Christmas sports but faintly remembered, and every thing around was full of green promise and blooming expectation.

The chief companions of his own age had long been the four schoolfellows before described—of whom Tom Greene was such a compound of oddness and drollery, as was not to be met with elsewhere. None like him could play the Hobby-horse in Friar Tuck, or the Fool in the May Games,

the Lord of Misrule in a twelfth night revel, or the Vice of a Moral Play. At plough Monday none was so much in request, and not less so was he at Candlemas eve, or Shrovetide, or Hocktide, or at Whitsun-ales, at a sheep-shearing, or a harvest home. Dick Burbage was more for the playing of ingenious tricks, which he carried off with such a careless happy impudence, that its pleasantry often took away all offence. Hemings had none of this humour, though he could enjoy it in others, yet when he joined his companions, he choose to play a courtly part, if such could be had. As for Condell he was ready enough to do whatever the others did. He would play with them at shuffle-board, or shove-groat, in a mumming, or an interlude, as eagerly as he would join them in running at the quintain, or assist them in the threshing of a shrove-tide hen. In fact he seemed to care not what it was, so he was one of the party, but if he might be allowed a preference he would gladly stand out for the playing of Gammer Gurton's needle.

During the time his thoughts were so busy feeding of his fantasy for the fair maid of Charlote, William Shakspeare had joined his compauions but seldom. In very truth he somewhat shrunk from their boisterous mirth, for he liked best to be alone ; but seeing nought of Mabel, his mind for want of that necessary nourishment, relaxed something in

the earnestness of its worship. At such an age and with such a nature this ideal idolatry requireth at least the frequent presence of the object, before it can take upon itself that warmer devotion which alone is lasting and natural; and without sight of the idol, the mere imaginative existence of this boyish love soon becomes manifest. Gradually the thoughts relax in their searching after admirable things with which to tire their gentle deity. They go not so far—they stay not so long—they bring home less and less every day; and thus it goeth on, the circuit of their visits lessening by degrees, and their labour becoming correspondingly unprofitable, till at last they cease altogether going out on any such errands. Now it may be considered the idolatry is at an end, though some faint vestige of it may linger about the mind; but it is a bygone superstition belonging to an ideal world, that will only be remembered by some beautiful presence in nature with which it was wont to be accompanied, as some will still believe they see the dryad in the tree and the nymph in the fountain. This was the time for entertaining that deeper worship to which allusion has just been made, and the young poet was not long without meeting with a suitable deity willing to excite and to receive it.

Hemings' friends lived at Shottery, a village at a little distance from Stratford, to which William Shakspeare and others of his companions occa-

sionally resorted, and one pleasant afternoon as the young poet was returning from a visit he had been paying to his schoolfellow, he was aroused from his customary meditations when alone by a sweet voice singing these words :—

THE SPINSTER'S SONG.

“ Damon came a praising me,
Vowing that he loved me too—
None like I so fair could be,
None like him could be so true.
I meant to chide, but spoke no sound—
And still my wheel went round and round.

“ Damon, somewhat bolder grown,
In his hand mine fondly placed,
Pressed it gently in his own,
Then his arm twined round my waist.
Somehow I smiled instead of frowned,
And still my wheel went round and round.

“ Damon brought his face nigh mine,
Though he knows I kisses hate ;
I would baulk his base design—
But, the wretch, he did it straight !
And then again !—and still I found
That still my wheel went round and round.”

During the singing of these verses the young poet was engaged in observing the singer. At a little distance from the road, running between Shottery and Stratford, was a neat cottage, trailed all over with a goodly pear tree, then in full blossom, with

a grass plat before it. It was not one of the common sort of cottages, for it possessed an appearance of comfort and respectability which shewed it belonged to some person at least of the rank of a yeoman. There was in one place a famous brood of poultry, and in another a good fat sow, with a litter of pigs, wandering about at their will. A fair garden and orchard stood beyond the house, and in a neat paddock at the side were a cow and a favourite poney. At the open door, through which might be seen notable signs of the solid comfort that prevailed within, some two or three very young children were taking of their supper of porridge in wooden bowls, occasionally throwing a spoonful to the fowls, to the monstrous gratification of both parties; whilst farther off a boy, of some eight or ten years, was sitting on a stool, amusing himself with a tame rabbit. The singer, however, was none of these. At a spinning wheel, placed close to the house at a few yards from the door, there sat a blooming girl, attired with that sort of daintiness with which such fair creatures do love to set off their comeliness. She was the singer. There was a laughing careless air with her as she sung the words, that, in the eyes of the spectator, much heightened the provocation of her pouting lips, and large, soft, languishing eyes, her rich dark complexion, and the budding fulness of her figure.

William Shakspeare had crept unseen behind a large walnut tree that stood in front of the cottage, where he stood like one spell-bound, drinking in at his eyes such intoxicating draughts of beauty, that they put him into a steep forgetfulness of all other matters in a presently; and here doubtless he would have stood, I know not how long, had not the singer made some sign she was aware of his vicinity—perchance she knew it all the time—however, spying of a handsome youth gazing on her in a manner she could not misinterpret, she rose from her seat in a seeming great surprise, and as she did so the young poet, in voluntary homage to the power he was so well inclined to honour, uncovered his head. There they stood, noticing of nothing but each other, and neither saying a word. All at once the little children dropped their bowls, and with infantile exclamations of delight ran as fast as they could to a tall, honest-looking, manly sort of man, who with a keg slung across his shoulders, and in a working dress, seemed as if he had just come from his labour in the fields. The young poet turned and beheld this person close behind him, with the children clinging to his legs with every appearance of exquisite sweet pleasure.

“Hallo, young sir! what dost want?” enquired he, eyeing the youthful Shakspeare with some curiosity.

“Truly, I want nothing,” replied the latter, a

little taken by surprise, as it were; "I was but attracted here by some sweet singing, and did not imagine I was doing of any wrong by listening."

"Humph!" exclaimed the elder, perfectly conscious that this was the truth; for he, having been behind the youth from the first, had witnessed the whole affair. "What's thy name?" added he.

"William Shakspeare," was the answer.

"Thought so,—give's thee hand," said the other frankly, and in the next moment the young poet found his palm grasped by his new acquaintance with a friendliness that quite astonished him. "Thy father and I are old friends from boys. Ask of him if he know not John Hathaway. Many a time hath he been in my house, and as oft have I been in his; and famous sport have we had together, I'll warrant. But somehow I have seen nought of him of late. As for thyself, I have heard very creditable report of thee, and therefore say, with all heartiness, I am glad to see thee here—so thou must needs come in and take a bit of supper with us."

William Shakspeare was in no mood for refusing of such a request; he accepted the invitation as freely as it was given, and both entered the cottage together. There the rack filled with bacon—the logs blazing comfortably in the deep chimney, with the gun hanging above, and the store of platters bowls, trenchers, and other household things that surrounded him on every side, were most con-

vincing proofs to the visitor that the owner lived in no sort of want.

"Here, Anne, take these things, and draw us a jug of ale," cried John Hathaway, putting down on the table what he had carried on his shoulder, as the singer hastened towards him, and would have a kiss of him with the rest—a proceeding, by the way, which his guest regarded with something of envy. "Then put these young ones to their beds, and afterwards cut us a delicate rasher, with such other things as thou hast for eating; for here is the son of an honest friend of mine who meaneth to sup with us."

"You shall have a most dainty supper anon, father," replied his daughter, busying herself without delay to do as she was required. In the meanwhile the youthful Shakspeare was making friends with the children, and by the kind affectionateness of his manner quickly won their little hearts.

"Come, draw up thy chair, friend. Will, and take a drink," said his host, seating himself in the chimney corner, where there were seats on each side. William Shakspeare did as he was bid, nothing loath, and presently the two fell into conversing about ordinary matters, and from these to other topics of more interest. The young visitor appeared desirous of making a favourable impression upon his host, for he endeavoured to make all his talk turn upon what the other was most familiar

with, and spoke so learnedly upon the state of the crops, the best systems of tillage, the prospects of the lambing season, and the breed of live stock, that he not only won the honest yeoman's heart, but he astonished him monstrously into the bargain. All the whilst he failed not to give an occasional admiring glance at the movements of his new friend's buxom daughter, who for her part seemed to give back his looks with some interest.

"How dost like our Anne's singing?" enquired John Hathaway, when his daughter had left the chamber to put the children to their beds.

"Very exceedingly I do assure you," replied the youth, with a notable sincerity.

"Humph!" exclaimed the father, as though he were a thinking of something he cared not to give speech to. "Indeed she hath a sweet throat." Nothing more was said on that head at that moment; and they again talked of country matters, till his host could not any longer contain his great wondering at his guest's marvellous insight into such things, and enquired how he acquired it; whereupon the other truly answered he got it by questioning of those whose business it was. In good time the yeoman's blooming daughter returned, and busied herself with preparations for supper, taking care whenever she could to have her share in the discourse, which she did with a pretty sprightliness exceedingly agreeable to her young admirer. See-

•

ing her attempting to move the great table nigher the fire, he must needs jump up, and with a graceful officiousness, seek to do it himself, the which she appeared to object to in some manner, and there was a little arguing of the matter betwixt them—the father looking on with a glimmering smile, as if he could see in it something exceeding pleasant. The end was, that the two young people carried the table together, manifestly to their extreme satisfaction.

This John Hathaway was one of the most industrious yeomen in the country, and had been some time a widower. He was of a famous pleasant temper, but was far from making a boisterous shew of it. He delighted greatly to assist in the honest pleasures of any other, yet few could guess from his manner on such occasions, that he took the interest in it he did. Indeed, he was somewhat of a sly humour, and liked none to know when he was most pleased. His honest well-embrowned countenance, set off with hair and beard, getting to be grey, never ventured on such occasions beyond a lurking smile, and even that he seemed to take care the parties who had excited it, should not see. Doubtless he was in a rare humour with his new acquaintance, but though he lacked nothing in hospitality, he appeared to hear him and regard him with so staid an aspect, it was difficult for the latter to know whether he was satisfied with him or

otherwise. Still the youth continued seeking to entertain his host with his converse, having sufficient reward in the approving glances of the other's sprightly daughter, who was well enough acquainted with such things to take a singular pleasure in observing the skill with which her young admirer spoke of them.

In due time the rashers were done, and with a store of other wholesome victual, were put on a fair white cloth, that covered the table, and William Shakspeare was pressed with blunt courtesy by the father, and a more winning persuasiveness by the daughter, to partake of the fare set before him. This he essayed to do with a notable good will. After this the blooming Anne brewed a goodly posset, and whilst they were enjoying it, her father called on her to sing him a song, the which she seemed a little, — a very little to hesitate upon, with a sort of pretty coyness time out of mind customary under similar circumstances, but after the handsome youth had pressed her with an excellent shew of rhetorick, she sung a dainty ditty, then popular, concerning of "The little pretty Nightingale," and at least one of the listeners thought it most exquisite sweet singing. Then John Hathaway would needs have a song of his guest, to the which his daughter added her entreaties so prettily, the youthful Shakspeare found it impossible to resist,

whereupon he commenced the singing of a favourite love-song of the time, beginning "If I hade wytt for to endyte." The words were of a pleasant conceit which gained considerably in admirableness by the manner of his singing, and the tune, by means of his rich clear voice, came upon the air a very river of melody. Whether the yeoman liked the song could only be told by the pleasure lurking in the corners of his mouth, and shining quaintly in his half-closed eye-lids, which might be interpreted he saw more in it than the singer imagined—however, that his daughter relished it there could be no questioning, for her smiles were full as evident as her praises.

"Now friend, 'Will, thee must be agoing," exclaimed John Hathaway at last, in his usual plain countryman sort of manner. "'Tis my custom to go to bed with the lamb, and rise with the lark—an excellent good custom I'll warrant—so I'll e'en bid thee a fair good night—nevertheless I will add to it I shall be happy to see thee at all times—and if I be not at home, perchance Anue will be as happy to see thee as myself." He said this with a look of humour that shone through all the staidness of his aspect, and shaking his visitor heartily by the hand, he opened the door for his exit. His daughter denied not a word of what her father had said. Indeed, her glances, as she bade

the youth good night, as plainly said—"Come again," as ever was expressed by a pair of bright eyes since the world began.

William Shakspeare returned home with his feelings in a sort of delicious pleasure, perfectly new to him. Be sure he would have hastened to the cottage next day, only he was forced to be at Sir Marmaduke's according to promise. The old knight took huge delight in having all festivals and holidays kept with due ceremony at his mansion. He would not have omitted the slightest things that savoured of the old times. Knowing this, the antiquary called his young scholar to his counsels, for the express purpose of getting up the festival of the May in such a manner as should outdo all former things of the like sort, and the youth had been commissioned to press into his service whoever he thought could afford him proper assistance. These he had to make familiar with their duties. But if he did not visit the fair singer that day, be sure he did the day following, invested with extraordinary powers by his friend Master Peregrine, with which he acquainted his new acquaintance John Hathaway, and to his exceeding satisfaction found they were favourably entertained of him:—the purport of which will be seen anon.

Scarce had the last day of April closed, when, by the sweet moonlight, William Shakspeare, with a famous company of both sexes—friends, tenants,

servants, and others—started to a neighbouring wood, where they searched about for all manner of flowers then in season, which they gathered into nosegays and garlands; and broke down blossoming boughs of trees, chiefly of birch, green sycamore, and hawthorn, to carry home with them to deck the doors and porches withal, and make a goodly maypole. Famous sport had they all the while, laughing and shouting, frolicking in the grass, and wandering about dispersedly, making the whole country ring with their mirth. About sunrise they again joined company—men, women, and children—each laden with the spoil of the Spring. A tall elm had been cut down, and a straight and taper pole fitted to the end of it, and painted in spiral lines of yellow and black. It was then prodigally adorned with garlands of fresh flowers and new ribbon of the gayest colours. Some forty yoke of oxen belonging to Sir Marmaduke, with each a sweet posey at the tip of his horns, had then to draw it home, accompanied on its slow march with the whole of the company, bearing their green boughs, savoury herbs, and odorous blossoms,—singing, leaping, and dancing, as if nothing could exceed their pleasure.

The maypole having been drawn to an open place in the park, convenient to the house, was raised up on high with a great shouting and glee; and it was a right dainty sight to note the streamers dancing merrily in the breeze, and the various colours of the

delicate blossoms. Having done this, the principals of the festival had other preparations to make, which they set about with a proper earnestness. All the armour in the old hall was presently hid under boughs and flowers, and the like decorations were prodigally bestowed in every direction about the house. On the floor the long tables were spread with cakes and cream, and other choice cates for whoever chose to come. The whole neighbourhood looked like a fairy bower, and crowds of persons in strange garments came thronging in and out, looking as joyful as ever they had been in their days.

After this, wholesome viands, and ale of the best, might be had in different bowers made of branches of trees in the park; and at dinner there was a most prodigal banquet of everything for to eat and to drink that could be procured. Here was a gammon of bacon-pie, there a lamb dressed whole—in one place a venison pasty, in another a great fish, a shield of brawn with mustard, a chine of beef roasted, baked chewets, a kid with a pudding in the belly, and all manner of poultry, made but a small stock of the wonderful load of victual under which the table groaned. Even the lower messes had most handsome entertainment, and every place bore sign of most sumptuous feasting. The great variety of dresses then worn, and the happy joyous faces there visible, made the whole scene as pleasant as one as could be imagined; but the goodliest feature

of it all was old Sir Marmaduke in his customary place at the top of the table, regarding every one with the same graciousness, and only looking around him to see that all present were as happy as he thought they ought to be. Of the jests that flew about, or of the tricks that were played, I can make scarce any mention. The strangeness, however, of some groups, methinks should not escape notice;—for in one place St. George and the dragon, forgetful of their deadly enmity, were shaking hands introductory to drinking each other's health; in another, Robin Hood and little John, as regardless of their mutual love, were seeking which could lay fastest hold of a tankard each had got a hand upon; here the fool was cunningly emptying of Friar Tuck's full trencher into his own empty one, whilst the other was turning a moment on one side in amorous gossip with his acquaintance, maid Marian; and then the hobby-horse was knocking together the heads of Will Stukely and Much, the miller's son, who were leaning over each other, laughingly regarding the proceedings of their friend in motley.

After this, by the great exertions of young Shakspeare, this goodly company returned to the park in the following order:—first, went one playing on the bag-pipes, and another on the tabor, making as much noise as they could; then followed the Morris-dancers, with their faces blackened, their coats of white spangled fustian, with scarfs, ribbons, and

laces flying from every part, holding rich handkerchiefs in their hands, and wearing purses at their girdles, garters to their knees, with some thirty or forty little bells attached to them, and feathers at their hats, with other bells at their wrists and elbows. They danced as they went, and flaunted their handkerchiefs very bravely. Then came six comely damsels, dressed in blue kirtles, and wearing garlands of primroses. After them, as many foresters in tunics, hoods, and hose, all of grass green, and each of them with a bugle at his side, a sheaf of arrows at his girdle, and a bent bow in his hand.

After them walked William Shakspeare, equipped as Robin Hood, in a bright grass green tunic, fringed with gold; his hood and hose parti-coloured blue and white; his handsome head was crowned with a garland of rose-buds; he bore a bow in his hand, a sheaf of arrows in his girdle, and a bugle-horn suspended from a baldrick of light blue tarantine, embroidered with silver, worn from his shoulder. A handsome sword and dagger formed also part of his equipments. On one side of him walked Hemings, as Little John; on the other Condell, as Will Stukely; and divers others of the merry outlaw's companions followed, two by two, all in their suits of green, and each with a sheaf of arrows at his girdle, and a bent bow in his hand. Then came two fair damsels, in orange coloured kirtles, with

white court-pies or vests, preceding Anne Hathaway, as Maid Marian, attired in a watchet-coloured tunic reaching to the ground, with a white linen rochet, with loose sleeves fringed with silver, and neatly plaited, worn over it, her girdle of silver baudeken fastened with a double row on the left side; her long silken hair, divided in many ringlets, flowed down upon her fair shoulders; the top of her head ornamented with a net-work caul of gold with a garland of silver, decked with fresh blue violets above: truly as tempting a Maid Marian as ever seduced outlaw to the merry green wood. After her came a company of her maidens; some in sky-coloured rochets girt with crimson girdles, with garlands of blue and white violets; and others, with green court-pies, with garlands of violets and cowslips.

Then came Sir Marmaduke's fat butler, as Friar Tuck, carrying a huge quarter staff on his shoulder; and with him Oliver Dumps, the constable, as Much, the miller's son, bearing a long pole with an inflated bladder attached to one end of it. Who should come next but Tom Greene, as the hobby-horse, frisking up and down, galloping, curvetting, ambling, and trotting after so moving a style, it naturally forced a horse-laugh from a great portion of the spectators. It should be remembered, that this ancient feature in a May-day festival, was a horse of pasteboard, having false legs for the rider

outside, whilst the real legs stood on the ground, concealed from the spectators by the saddle-cloth which enveloped the hobby-horse all around; and great art was required to make a proper exhibition of horsemanship, by the person appearing to be its rider. Then came our old acquaintance Humphrey, in the form of a dragon,—hissing, yelling, and shaking his wings in a most horrid manner; and after him Dick Burbage, as St. George, in full armour, ever and anon, giving his enemy a poke behind, with his wooden spear, that made him roar again. Following these were a motley assemblage of villagers and guests, and Sir Marmaduke, with his chaplain, in the midst.

When they came to that open part of the park before described, the sports recommenced with the spirit they had not known all the day before. The foresters shot at the target, and Robin and his Maid Marian were of course the chiefest of all for skill. Some danced round the maypole; but the dragon, who had drank more of the knight's good ale than became any dragon of gentility, must needs be after kissing divers of the maidens—married man though he was, and this got him some whacks from Much, the miller's son, besides a decent cudgelling from Will Stukely and Little John. Master Robin, Sir Marmaduke's fat butler, made a most jolly Friar Tuck; for with an irresistible droll humour in his roguish eyes, he would walk among the people dropping of

his heavy quarter-staff upon their toes, whereupon if any cried out, he would very gravely preach them a famous sermon on patience under pain and affliction; and bidding them count their beads and say their paternosters, he would go his way.

Many persons had come to see these sports from the neighbouring villages, and these formed a crowd nearly all round the place. Sir Marmaduke and his guests had placed themselves on a piece of rising ground in front of the house, some lying of their lengths on the grass, some leaning against trees, some sitting, and some standing. Sir Johan kept by the side of his patron with a pleasant gravity, making a most admirable choice thanksgiving for the bounties all had received that day. Sir Reginald, who had only returned to the mansion the same morning, was with his friend Sir Valentine, gallantly attending upon a bevy of fair ladies who had come to witness the sports; and Master Peregrine was bustling about in a sort of fidgetty delight, explaining to every listener he could lay hold of, the history and antiquity of every part of the festival. It so happened that whilst St. George was stalking round the place, armed with spear and buckler, striving to look as heroic as ever could have done that renowned champion, he spied the dragon playing at bo-peep among the Morris-dancers, and almost at the same instant the dragon spied him. At which the latter commenced advancing into the middle of

the open space betwixt the maypole and the guests, shaking of his wings, yelling, and hissing enough to frighten all the champions in Christendom.

St. George, however, was after him with long strides, till they met in a very choice place for fighting, when he addressed him in these words:—

“Hullo, thou pitiful villain, art thou for turning tail?

Stay here, I prythee, a moment, and I will make thee wail!”

Whereupon the dragon answered in a monstrous fustian voice—

“Out on thee, Jack Pudding! or if thou needs must stay,

I’ll swallow thee—bones and all—and leave the rest for another day.”

Then exclaimed the champion very valiantly, as became him—

“Peace knave! have done with thy humming and hawing.”

And thereupon the monster replied, in an equally tearing humour—

“Gogs zounds, if thou comest anigh me, I’ll give thee a famous clawing!”

After a little more such brave language, in which each got famously abused by the other, they seemed intent upon a desperate combat of life and death. The dragon made more noise than ever he had; and came upon his adversary with his claws extended, and his mouth wide open, as though he meant to make of him but a mere mouthful; but

St. George seemed quite up to his tricks, for he presently clenched his spear and braced his buckler, and gave the monster so sore a poke, he yelled till the place echoed with him. Then cried he out very lustily—

“ Wounds ! thou caitiff vile ! thou hast broken a joint of my tail—
I die ! I’m dead ! Oh for a drop of small ale ! ”

At this moment up comes Much, the miller’s son, with his pole and bladder, exclaiming to the deceased monster :—

“ What ho, Sir Dragon ! hast indeed ceased thy snubbing ?
Mayhap thou wouldst be the better for a decent drubbing. ”

Upon which he began to lay upon the monster with his bladder with such force the other started to life roaring like a town bull, crying out, as he rubbed himself, very pitifully—

“ Go hang for a knave, and thy thumping cease,
Canst not let a poor dragon die in peace ? ”

But as the miller’s son evidently had no bowels for the monster, the dragon would not stay any longer to be drubbed, and rose to take himself off with what speed he might ; but just at this moment up came the hobby-horse, capering away in the most delicate fashion, and he thus addressed the other :—

“ List, lording’s, list ! I am here in my best graces
With my ambles, my trots, and my Canterbury paces.

Is not my tail fresh frizzled, and my mane new shorn,
And my bells and my plumes are they not bravely worn?
Stand up Sir Dragon, and swear me sans remorse
There never was seen so rare a hobby horse."

Upon saying which he neighed like a young filly, and cantered and careered round the monster, so that he could not move in any way. Others of the characters came up, and they all had some droll thing or another to say; and it ended with the whole party joining hands for a dance round the maypole, which seeing, Master Peregrine, who had for the last hour fidgetted about as if he knew not what to do with himself, suddenly started from his place at the top of his speed, and in the next minute had got the dragon by one hand and the hobby-horse by the other, dancing round the maypole, to the infinite delight of the spectators, with as prodigal signs of glee as though he were the merriest of the lot.

The youthful Shakspeare played the part of king of the festival, and in princely sort he did it too; for it was remarked of many, so choice a Robin Hood and Maid Marian they had never seen. Doubtless he had famous opportunities for increasing his acquaintance with the blooming daughter of John Hathaway, and there is every reason for supposing he turned them to good account. In due time the sports ended, and he walked home with her and her father—who with his family had pur-

posely enjoyed a holiday, induced to it by the representations of his new acquaintance—if not perfectly in love, as nigh to it as it was possible for him to be.

It was late in the evening of the same day when Sir Reginald, for the first time, found himself alone with his friend Sir Valentine, he having managed to draw the latter to walk with him in the park, convenient to the house. The sounds of revelry had ceased, and both actors and spectators had retired to their homes. The two young knights strolled together silently in the shadow of the trees, Sir Valentine thinking it would be a favourable opportunity for him to acquaint his friend with what had taken place betwixt him and the sovereign of his heart's affections, and ask his advice and assistance to carry on his suit to her to an honourable conclusion.

“Dost remember that exquisite sweet creature we rescued from villains at Kenilworth?” enquired Sir Reginald.

“Indeed do I, marvellously well,” replied Sir Valentine, somewhat wondering his friend should begin to speak of the very subject of his own thoughts.

“I tell thee, Sir Valentine,” continued the other, with exceeding earnestness, “all the whilst I was at court, even amongst the choicest damsels of the chiefest families of the kingdom, I could think of

none other but her; for each did but remind me of her infinite superiority in all loveable delectable graces." His young companion walked on, listening with a pale cheek and a throbbing heart. "The first thing I did on approaching this neighbourhood," continued the other, "was to hie me to Charlcote, in the hope of delighting mine eyes with a glimpse of her fair beauty once again. I was so fortunate as to meet with her. She appeared lovelier than ever, and a sort of sadness was manifest in her dainty fair countenance, that made its attractiveness infinitely more touching. She seemed glad to see me. I assure thee I lingered in her delightful society, utterly incapable of tearing myself away. Never met I a maiden of such moving graces, or of such delicate behaviour. In brief, I love her—as absolutely as ever fond heart can." Sir Valentine felt as though he could scarce breathe.

"I have sought thee here to tell thee of this," added Sir Reginald. "Knowing thou art the truest friend that ever knight had. And I would make such trial of thy friendship as I would of none other living. My entire happiness is in the keeping of this most divine creature; and I would give worlds could I sigh at her feet, or bask in her smiles as often as I desire. But I have plighted my word to my honourable good friend, that notable brave gentleman, Sir Philip Sydney, to accompany him in a certain expedition he is pre-

paring for, and therefore it must needs be I can have but small occasion for carrying on my suit. Being in this strait, and knowing of thy extreme trust-worthiness, and exceeding love for me, I would obtain at thy hands such true service, as for thee to seek out my soul's idol on all warrantable occasions, and with such affectionate rhetorick as thou canst master for so loving a purpose, urge her on my behalf. Give her no cause to mark my absence. Press her with passionate importunities. Let thy talk be ever of my devotion to her, and thy manner of such a sort as should convince her of its earnestness." Sir Valentine essayed to speak, but the words died unuttered in his throat.

"Can I have such important service rendered me?" enquired Sir Reginald. "But I am assured I cannot appeal to so true a friend unprofitably. I know enough of that honourable worthy nature to convince me nothing will be left undone that the circumstances require."

Sir Valentine managed at last to utter his consent to do what was required of him; and then fearful he should betray his own feelings if he stopped where he was, he made an excuse for hurrying away, wrung his friend's hand more affectionately than ever he had done, though at the moment his own heart was more forcibly wrung by the fierce trial he was undergoing, and left him, to school his nature into the doing of what he had undertaken.

CHAPTER VIII.

Come may Celia, let us prove
Whilst we can the joys of love;
Time will not be ours for ever:
He at length our good will sever.
Spend not then his gifts in vain
Suns that set may rise again;
But if once we lose this light
'Tis with us perpetual night.

BEN JONSON.

Oh with that
I wish to breath my last; upon thy lips
Those equal twins of comeliness, I seal
The testament of honourable vows.
Whoever be that man that shall unkiss
The sacred print next, may he prove more thrifty
In this world's just applause, not more desertful.

FORD.

THE behaviour of the youthful Shakspeare to the yeoman's blooming daughter, might, perchance, be to the marvel of some who have in their remembrance the infinite delicacy and retiringness of his conduct towards the beautiful foundling at Charlcote, but these things are to be considered—to wit, that he had in a manner out-lived that age of boyish shyness which so manifestly appeared in him, and with it that mere ideal adoration with which it was accompanied. His love

for Mabel was but a sentiment, born in the mind and dying there; yet heralding the coming of another love, partaking more of passion than of sentiment, engrossing both the heart and the mind in all their entireness, and shewing such a vigorous existence as plainly proved how firm a hold it had on the powerfulest energies of life. Anne Hathaway was altogether different from the foundling. Her rich rosy complexion—her careless free glance, and her eloquent soft smile expressed quite another character. Her manners were equally opposite—being of that heedless enticing sort, which draweth all eyes admiringly, and soon suns them into a social delightful warmth. But this was nothing more than the outward display of a natural fond temperament, where the heart was overflowing with generous sweet feelings, and was anxious for an object on whom to display its exceeding bountifulness. Such a one, clothed with such resistless fascinations, was sure to produce an extraordinary impression on the ardent nature of the young poet. Her approving glance — her seductive smile — or her slightest touch, filled him with a sense of joyousness no language could express.

These were unequivocal signs of love in its riper stage. At this period of youth the imprisoned affections burst from their womb, and start into life with impulses that will allow of no controlling. Every thing weareth a new aspect. A rosier light shines

through the atmosphere. A warmer breath is felt upon the breeze. A multitude of new feelings seem struggling in the breast to have free development, and in fact the whole humanity appeareth to take on itself a character perfectly distinct from that which it had previously worn. Nature now whispereth in the ear a secret unthought of hitherto; and all the man riseth at the intelligence, filled with a mysterious influence—a sense of happiness and power—and a knowledge of that sweet philosophy whose right use maketh a very Eden of delight to the Adams and Eves of every passing generation.

Anne Hathaway received the advances of her youthful lover so welcomingly, that he lacked nothing of inducement to proceed. Indeed, her's was not a disposition to withstand the passionate ardour of so prepossessing a wooer, and from the first hour of their meeting, she had regarded him with most favourable sentiments. It was some time after the May-day festival that the blooming Anne, as was customary with her, sat plying of her wheel in her old place, whilst her youthful lover, as was usual with him, had drawn a seat close to hers, having his arm resting on the back of her chair. Some exquisite speeches and passionate admiring looks from him, were followed by a sufficiency of sprightly answers and bright provoking glances from her. Thus had their mutual passion advanced and

no further, but it was soon to shew more endearing signs.

"Canst affect verses, Anne?" enquired the young poet.

"Ay, a sweet love song, of all things," replied the village beauty, in her ordinary free-hearted way.

"Wouldst approve of them any the more if thou wert their subject?" asked he.

"Should I not?" answered she, archly. "Marry, I must needs think them the finest, sweetest verses ever writ."

"I have essayed the writing of some," continued her youthful lover, in a more tender manner. "But I am rather out of heart I have not produced a poem more worthy of thy exceeding merit."

"Hast, indeed, written something of me?" exclaimed the yeoman's buxom daughter, glancing at him a look of infinite curiosity and pleasure. "O' my word, now, I should be right glad to see it."

"If thou wilt promise to pardon my too great boldness, I will here read these, my poor verses," said the young poet. His companion was too eager to know what *could* he have written about her, to care much what she promised; so, whilst she sent her wheel round very diligently, her youthful lover drew a paper from beneath his doublet, and soon, with an exquisite impassioned manner, and soft mellow voice—somewhat tremulous here and there—he commenced reading what is here set down.

LOVE'S ARGOSIE.

- " Awhile ago I passed an idle life
Like as a leaf that's borne upon the breeze ;
Thoughtless of love as lambkin of the knife,
Or the young bird, of hawk, among the trees.
I knew not, thought not, cared not for the morrow,
And took unblessed my daily joy or sorrow.
- " I saw the bounteous hand of Nature fling
Her princely largess over each green place ;
I saw the blushes of the tender Spring
Hiding within the Summer's warm embrace ;
I saw the burthened Autumn fast expiring.
And Winter, in the year's grave, make a cheerful firing.
- " Yet all the time was I as blind as mole
Who digs his habitation in the dark,
Though light there was, it fell not on my soul,
A fire burned bravely that shewed me no spark ;
Whilst all owned Nature's spells, I saw no charming,
And still kept cold whilst others were a warming.
- " When suddenly mine eyes threw ope their doors
And sunny looks flashed in their fond desires ;
The chambers of my heart found glowing floors
For there each hearth blazed with continual fires :
I saw the magic, felt the bliss 'twas bringing,
And knew the source whence these delights were springing.
- " For then it was indifference met its death,
And my new life new climates seemed to seek ;
The sweet South flung its odours from thy breath,
And the warm East came blushing o'er thy cheek.
Thy smiles were endless Summer's rosy dances,
And the soft zone shone in thy torrid glances.

“ And as thy wondrous beauty I beheld,
A thousand unknown raptures on me came ;
The flood of life, by some strange power impelled,
Rushed through its channels, turned to liquid flame :
And then with me there seemed such blooming weather
As though all seasons shower'd their flowers together.

“ And as I basked in thy subduing gaze,
And caught the thrilling spirit of thy smile ;
I marvelled I had lived so many days,
So blind, so cold, so ignorant the while ;
‘ Certes,’ quoth I, ‘ I’ve been in far off places,
Else had I sooner known such moving graces.’

“ Ay—in strange latitudes and unknown waves,
Having no compass, aid of chart denied,
There rose before me mountains, plains, and caves,
And a new world my curious vision spied :
And then it was that fair country thy beauty
Brought me to anchor—a most welcome duty.

“ To turn discovery to best account,
I studied every feature of the land ;
I scanned where’er the highest fruit could mount,
I touched the tender produce of thy hand ;
And every where such heaps of sweets were growing,
No place on earth could be so worth the knowing.

“ Then having this bright world so newly found,
And learned its fitness for an honest home,
Must I be now on a fresh voyage bound
Again in unknown latitudes to roam ?
Oh might I name it, hold it, own it, rather,
And from its spoil a matchless fortune gather !

“ Dear heart ! sweet life ! most admirable fair saint !
To thee my soul its fond devotion brings,

Like a poor pilgrim weary, worn, and faint
To taste the comfort which thy beauty brings :
Hear how thy praise all excellence excelleth !
Hear how my prayer within my worship dwelleth !

“ Believe me the fond charm thou dost possess,
Is not a gift meant to be idly used,
But a kind solace that should come to bless
That heart whose blessings thou hast not refused,
I see in it a promise and a token
Of flowery bands that never can be broken.

“ And now like those bold mariners of ships,
That from all ports do take their merchandize,
My bark would I unlade upon thy lips
Which awhile since I freighted at thine eyes.
Yet e'er from such kind port my sails are fading,
Doubt not I bear away a richer lading.

“ Bring here the ivory of thy fair arms,
And lustrous jewels which thine eyelids hold,
Bring here the crowning of thy store of charms,
The silky treasures which thy brows enfold ;
Bring here the luscious fruits thy soft cheek beareth,
And those rare pearls and rubies thy mouth weareth !

“ But that which doth them all in rareness beat—
The choicest traffic brought from loving isles—
Bring me the dainty balm and odorous sweet,
That fills thy tempting treasury of smiles :
That whilst I'm filled with Beauty's precious blisses,
Thou makest me—an argosie of kisses ! ”

It was scarce possible to have met with a prettier sight than the yeoman's blooming daughter listening, with her eyes sparkling unutterable pleasure, as the young poet read to her her tuneful praises. The

wheel went round, but she spoke not a word. Indeed she would not hazard so much as a syllable, fearful she might by it lose some part of those, to her, exquisite verses. At the conclusion, wherein his voice sunk to a tremulous soft murmur, he lifted his gaze from the paper to the flushed countenance of his fair companion, and received a glance he could not fail to understand. Upon a sudden, his arm fell from the back of her chair, and encircled her girdle, and—and—and—the wheel stopped for a full minute.

“Humph!” exclaimed a familiar voice, close at hand, and, starting from their affectionate embrace, they beheld John Hathaway with that peculiar expression peeping from the corners of his eyes and mouth, which marked the more than ordinary pleasure he took in any thing. In a moment, the blushing Anne was diligently looking on the ground for something she had never lost; and her youthful lover, in quite as rosy a confusion, was gallantly assisting her to find it. To the father’s sly questions the daughter answered a little from the purpose; and as for the young poet, he all at once remembered some pressing duty that called him thence, took a hurried leave of his friend, the yeoman, who was evidently laughing in his sleeve the whilst, and with a quick fond glance, repaid with interest, to his fair mistress—whose sprightliness

had somehow forsaken her—he wended his way back to Stratford.

In very truth, he was in far too happy a state to have stayed where he was, and a third person by. His feelings were in a complete tumult; his thoughts in a delicious confusion. He felt as if he could have taken the whole world in his arms, he was on such friendly terms with every one. He experienced the delightful consciousness of being loved—to him a new and rare enjoyment—and his was a disposition fitted to receive it with a sense of such extreme pleasure as humanity hath seldom known. What were his thoughts when he could get to any reasonable thinking—or his feelings, when he returned to his ordinary sensations, I cannot take upon me to say; but all pointed to one subject, and rose from one subject; and whether he regarded himself or the world around him, it came to the same matter. To him every thing was Anne Hathaway; but especially all wisdom, goodness, beauty, and delight, took from her their existence, and gave to her their qualities. She was, in brief, the sun round which the rest of creation must needs take its course. In this excitement of mind and heart he proceeded on his path, only brought to a more sober state as he neared home. It so happened, at the outskirts of the town, his attention was forcibly attracted by the riotous shouting of a crowd round the horse pond.

"Prythee tell me, what meaneth this huge disturbance?" enquired he of one of a knot of old women, who, beating the end of her stick furiously on the ground, knocked together her pointed nose and chin, as she poked her head towards one, and then towards another, with all the thorough earnestness of a confirmed gossip.

"Meaneth it?" replied Mother Flytrap, in her cracked treble, as she rested her two hands upon her stick, and thrust her ancient visage close to the face of the querist. "By my fackings, it meaneth the very horriblest, infamousness that ever was seen in this mortal world. But it's what we must all come to."

"Ay, marry—flesh is grass!" said another old beldame.

"But I have my doubts—I have my doubts, gossip," mumbled out another of the tribe; "it hath been credibly said strange lights and unchristian noises have appeared in her cottage; and I did myself see, standing at her door, the very broom some do say she flies through the air upon."

"Odds codlings hast though, indeed!" enquired Mother Flytrap, with something like horror muffled up in the hues of her parchment skin. "Well, if she be a witch, she must either drown or swim—that's one comfort."

"Who's a witch?" asked William Shakspeare,

who had turned from one to the other of his companions, in a vain hope of getting the intelligence he required.

“God’s precious! who but Nurse Cicely, that hath bewitched Farmer Clodpole’s cows,” replied one of the women; and scarce were the words out of her mouth, when the young poet, with an infinite small shew of gallantry, pushed his way through them, and rushed with all his force into the crowd. The outcries he heard seemed to him the yells of savage beasts eager for blood. Shouts of “In with her!”—“Drown the old witch!” and all sorts of oaths and ribald expressions came to his ears, with the half-choked screaming of their victim. He thrust himself forward, pushing the crowd to the right and to the left, till he stood upon the brink of the pond; and just beheld his faithful old nurse emerging from the water, gasping for breath, whilst some dozen or so of rude ploughboys, butchers, and the like characters, kept encouraging one another in helping to drown the poor creature. Without a word said, William Shakspeare sprung upon the busiest of the lot, and tumbled him into the pond, evidently to the exceeding pleasure of the majority of the spectators. Perchance, his companions would have resented this, but directly young Shakspeare made his appearance, a throng of his old associates hurried from all parts of the crowd, and made a simultaneous rush upon the tormentors of

the poor nurse, by which help, divers of them were presently sent floundering alongside of their fellow, the which the lookers on seemed to enjoy above all things.

Whilst Humphrey, now growing to be monstrous valiant, Greene, Burbage, Hemings, and Condell were, with others of a like spirit, putting to flight such of the lewd villains as seemed inclined to stand out upon the matter, William Shakspeare carefully drew Nurse Cicely out of the pond, untied her bonds, and bore her, all dripping as she was, to her own cottage, where, with the assistance of some humane neighbours, he at last succeeded in rescuing her from the death with which she had been threatened. The gratitude of the poor creature was beyond all conceiving; and at last, the object of it felt obliged to take himself out of hearing of her earnest prodigal thankfulness and praise.

Among the observers of the scene just described, regarding the chief personage in it with more intentness than any there, was a somewhat crabbed-looking man, meanly clad, who, from beside a tree a little above the pond, had witnessed the whole transaction. When the woman was rescued, he followed her deliverer at some distance, accosting none, and replying to such as were hardy enough to speak to him, in so rough unmannerly a manner few sought acquaintance with him. Whilst William Shakspeare was in the cottage, this person loitered

at a little way from it, occasionally leaning on his staff, with his eyes fixed upon the ground—then glancing at the cottage-door, and strolling leisurely about without losing sight of it.

As the young poet was hastening from his old nurse's dwelling, in a famous pleasure with the result of his exertions, he heard some one close at his heels. Presently, a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and turning round, he beheld John a Combe, the usurer. He had long been familiar with his person, having met with him before frequently, and had imbibed a respect for his character from the favourable opinions of him expressed by his parents. Such portion of his history as was known he had been made acquainted with from many sources, but the mystery which had enveloped him since his extraordinary change, he had never acquired any more knowledge of than the rest of his townfolk.

"Dost shrink from me, boy?" enquired John a Combe, in a sharp thick voice, as he noticed a sudden start of surprise in the youth when he recognised the usurer. "Art ashamed of being seen with Old Ten in the Hundred? Wouldst desire no acquaintance with one whose heart clingeth to his gold, and shutteth his soul against all sympathy with humanity?"

"I think not of you in that way, Master Combe,

believe me," replied his young companion, with his usual gentle courtesy.

"Then thou art a fool; Will Shakspeare!" gruffly exclaimed the other; "heed thou the general voice. Ask of whomsoever thou wilt concerning of John a Combe, the usurer. Will they not tell thee he is a very heartless tyrant, who liveth upon the widow's sighs and the orphans tears,—who grinds the poor man's bones, and drinks the prodigal's blood? Do they not swear in the very movingest execrations he is a persecuting relentless enemy to all his race, who careth only to set baits for their carcasses, and when he hath got them in his toils, sheweth them no more mercy than a hungry wolf?"

"I never heard of such things," replied William Shakspeare. "Indeed, I have known divers speak of you as having shewn such honourable good qualities as entitled you to the love of all honest men."

"Then were they greater fools than thou art," sharply exclaimed John a Combe, "I tell thee I am such a one. I find my happiness in the misery of others. I live when my fellows die. My heart is but a pedestal that carryeth a golden image, at which I force all the children of want to bow themselves down, and then trample on their necks to make me sport."

"In very truth, I can believe nothing of it, worthy sir," observed his young companion. "Me thinks too, what you have said is so opposite to what I have heard from the crediblest testimony you have done, that it is too unnatural to be true. Was it not Master Combe, who spent his substance freely to better the condition of his poorer neighbours? Was it not Master Combe, who held his life as at a pin's fee, to guard his fellow-creatures from the destroying pestilence?"

"Ay, I was once of that monstrous folly," said the usurer, with great bitterness; "I carried wine in a sieve—only to be spilled upon barren ground. What have I learned by this prodigal expenditure and silly painstaking? The notable discovery that men are knaves and women wantons—that friendship is a farce and love a cheat—that honesty is a fool and honour a bubble—and that the whole world hath but one particular influence on which its existence holds—and that is utter villainy."

"As far as I have seen, everything of which you have spoken hath an entire difference," said the other. "That there may be bad men amongst the good I cannot take upon me to deny; but that this should condemn all mankind for vileness, seemeth exceeding unjust. According to what I have learned, man in favourable circumstances will generally be found possessed of the best qualities of manhood; and such is the natural excellence of his

nature, that even under most unfit occasions the proper graces of humanity will flourish in him as bravely as though they had had the most tender culture."

"Tut!" cried John a Combe, impatiently; "'tis the opinion of such as have gained their knowledge in closets. They take for granted what is told them, and their poor pride will not allow of their crediting anything that is to the prejudice of their own natures."

"And as for woman," continued the young poet more earnestly, "'tis hard to say one word against a creature so excellently gifted. Methinks she would make praise a beggar, by her worthiness taking all he hath!"

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed the usurer in a sort of scornful laugh. "Why, boy, thy nature is in a rare humour to be cozened. Didst ever hear of any particular villainy out viling all things, that did not come of a woman? Who was it that first held fellowship with a serpent for man's undoing,—on which occasion she shewed how near her disposition was to the crawling crafty venom of her chosen associate. But she soon outdid the reptile in his own vocation; and now her craft would laugh the fox to scorn, and her guile cheat the serpent to his face."

"I should be loath to think so ill of her, having had most convincing proofs of her different cha-

acter," said the youthful Shakspeare, with a very pleasurable remembrance of one at least of that sex. "For mine own part I conceive there is no telling all her goodness; but I do remember some sentences in which it doth appear to me her true nature is most admirably painted, and they are these:—'of her excellence I would content myself with asking—what virtue is like to a woman's? What honesty is like to a woman's? What love—what courage—what truth—what generousness—what self-denial—what patience under affliction, and forgiveness for every wrong, come at all nigh unto such as a woman sheweth? Believe me, the man who cannot honour so truly divine a creature, is an ignorant poor fellow, whom it would be a compliment to style a fool,—or an ungrateful mean wretch, whom charity preventeth me from calling a villain!' Said you not these words, Master Combe, for I have been told they were of your own speaking?"

"Doubtless!" exclaimed John a Combe with a sarcastic emphasis, "I was, when I uttered such words, as thou art now—moved by a strong belief in the existence of qualities with which my wishes were more familiar than my vision. Appearances looked fair, and I took for granted all things were what they seemed. But of most choice matters woman seemed infinitely the rarest. There is nought I would not have said—there is nought I would not

have done, to prove how far above ordinary merit I thought her exceeding excellence. I was a fool—a poor, ignorant, weak fool, who will readily take brass well gilt for the sterling metal. I had to learn my lesson, and in good time it was thoroughly taught me. Experience rubbed off the external shew of worth that had cheated mine eyes into admiration and my heart into respect; and the base stuff in all its baseness stood manifestly confessed before me. Woman!” added he with increasing bitterness, “go search the stagnant ditch that fills the air with pestilential poison—where toads and snakes fester among rotting weeds, and make a reeking mass of slime and filth around them,—I tell thee, boy, nothing of all that vileness approacheth to the baseness of her disposition. Woman! She is an outrage upon nature, and a libel upon humanity.—A fair temptation that endeth in most foul disappointment.—The very apples on the shores of the dead sea, that are all blooming without and all rottenness within—a thing that hath never been truly described save under those shapes believed in in a past religion, whose features were human, and whose person bestial. Woman! She is the mother of infamy, ready to play the wanton with all the vices, and fill the world with a fruitful progeny of crimes. She is the cozener of honesty—the mockery of goodness—a substantial deceit—a living lie!”

“I pray you pardon me,” said his young com-

panion; "these are most intolerable accusations, and no warrant for them as I can see."

"Warrant!" cried the usurer, now with his whole frame trembling with excitement; "I have had such warrant—such damnable warrant as leaveth me not the shadow of a doubt on the matter. I have heard—I have seen—I have felt!" continued he, grasping the shoulder of the youth convulsively, then seeming to make a mighty effort to conquer his emotions, which for a moment appeared almost to choke him, he added in a calmer voice—"But it matters not. Perchance thou wilt have the wit to discover all that I would have said. I am in no mind to let the gossips of the town meddle with my secrets. I like not they should say 'poor John a Combe!' for I care not to have their pity. Say not to any thou hast spoke to me on such a subject, and when thou hast a mind to pass an hour with Ten in the Hundred come to my dwelling; I should be glad to see thee, which I would say of no other person. Thou art the son of an honest man, and I have seen signs in thee that prove thou art worthy of thy father." Saying these words, John a Combe hastily took his departure down a turning in the street, leaving William Shakspeare marvelling hugely at what had passed between them.

CHAPTER IX.

Follow a shadow, it still flies you,
Seek to fly it, it will pursue;
So court a mistress, she denies you,
Let her alone she will court you.

BEN JONSON.

"And now I dare say," said Sir Bohert, "that Sir Launcelot, though there thou liest, thou wert never matched of none earthly knight's hands. And thou wert the curtiest knight that ever beare shield. And thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrod horse. And thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman. And thou wert the kindest man that ever stroke with sword. And thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among presse of knights. And thou wert the meekest and the gentlest that ever eate in hall among ladies."

A book of the noble historyes of Kinge Arthur, and of certeyn of his knyghtes.

SIR VALENTINE found he had undertaken a most hard duty. The more he essayed to struggle with his own inclinations, the more strongly they rose against such usage. He tried to preach himself into a cheerful acquiescence with the obligation imposed upon him, from every text of honour, friendship, and chivalry, with which he was acquainted, but he found nature rather an unwilling convert, as she is at all times when her faith already resteth upon the religion of love. Nevertheless, he determined to do Sir Reginald the promised ser-

vice, however difficult of accomplishment it might be. In very truth he was one of those rare instances of friendship that act up to the character they profess. In numberless cases there are persons calling themselves friends, who are friends only to themselves. They are ready enough to take the name, but shrink from a proper performance of the character. Friendship in its honourablest state is a continual self-sacrifice on the altar of social feeling, combined with a devotion which ever inclineth to exalt the object of its regard above all humanity. A true friend alloweth himself as it were to be the shadow of another's merit, attending on all his wants, hopes, and pleasures, and ever keeping of himself in the background when he is like to interfere with his happiness. And yet there have been such despicable mean spirits who would hide their contemptibleness under so fair a cloak. They profess friendship but they act selfishness. Nay, to such a pitch do they debase themselves, that they would behold unfeelingly him they call their friend pining away his heart for some long expected happiness, and basely rob him of it when it required but their assistance to ensure it to his glad possession.

The young knight was of a far different sort. Even with so powerful a competitor as love, he would give himself entirely to friendship. He knew that the assistance he had promised to render

his friend would cost him his own happiness, but he could not for a moment tolerate the idea of building his enjoyment with the materials of his friend's felicity. He believed that if Sir Reginald knew what were his feelings towards the object of their mutual affection, he would on the instant resign his pretensions, that his friend's hopes might not be disappointed; and therefore the young knight was the more resolute in fulfilling the wishes of his faithful companion, and as an important step towards the consummation, kept the secret of his own love locked up closely in his breast. He heard Sir Reginald again express his desires, and again did he declare his readiness to assist in their realisation. He saw his friend depart to join Sir Philip Sydney, and experienced an exquisite satisfaction in knowing that the other had left him without the slightest suspicion of his own true feelings.

Time passed on, and Sir Valentine strove to perform his task. He had seen but little of Mabel for a long time past, for she scarce ever ventured alone any distance from the house, fearing she might be again carried off as she had been before; and this accounted for her not having been seen for so long a period by the youthful Shakspeare. At last the young knight contrived to speak with her, and to his entreaties for her private company, to acquaint her with a matter of some importance it was necessary she should know, she named a

spot in the park where she would meet him that evening after dusk. And there she attended true to her appointment. Sir Valentine as he gazed upon her admirable beauty, felt that he had much to perform, but he tried all he could to stifle his feelings, and think of no other thing save the advancement of his friend's wishes. Alack ! he was setting about a most perilous task. To play the suitor of an exquisite fair creature as proxy for another, methinks for one of his youth and disposition was great temptation ; but having already loved her with all the ardour of a first fond affection, now to woo her merely as the representative of his friend, looks to be a thing out of the course of nature.

"Methinks this friend of yours must needs have taken entire possession of your thoughts," observed Mabel, with a smile, upon finding that at every interview the young knight could say nought but praise of Sir Reginald. "I cannot get you to talk of any other thing."

"Indeed, so gallant a gentleman and so perfect a knight doth not exist," replied Sir Valentine. "I have seen him, lady, in the thickest of the field, bearing himself so bravely as was the marvel of both foes and friends."

"And were you in that battle?" enquired she, with a singular curiousness; "I pray you tell me how it was fought. I should like much to hear

what share you had in it. I doubt not you behaved very gallantly."

"I kept in the press as nigh to Sir Reginald as I could," continued the young knight; "for I knew much honour was only to be reaped where he led the way. Truly he is a knight of most approved valour."

"I cannot doubt it, since you have so said," replied Mabel, impatiently. "But I beseech you leave all speech of him, and take to telling me of your own knightly achievements."

"By this light, lady, I am nought in comparison with Sir Reginald," said his friend, earnestly; "never met I a gentleman so worthy of the love of woman. Indeed, I know he is kindly esteemed of many noble dames; yet in his estimation all such have been but indifferently thought of, since his knowledge of your so much brighter perfections."

"Surely, he doth great wrong to those noble dames by thinking at all of me," observed the fair foundling.

"He doth consider you so pre-eminent in excellence, language cannot express his admiration," added Sir Valentine.

"I feel bound to him for his good opinion," said Mabel. "Yet I should have been glad had he shewn more discretion than in bestowing it so prodigally."

"The love of so noble a knight ought to be re-

garded as a most costly jewel," continued the young knight. "I cannot think so proud a gift is to be met with."

"Perchance not," replied his companion, coldly. "Yet I cannot say it hath any particular attractions in my eyes."

Here was a new difficulty to be overcome. The lovely object of his friend's attachment cared not to be loved by him. This he had not calculated upon. Sir Reginald's happiness appeared farther from his possession than Sir Valentine could have imagined. Nevertheless, the latter was not to be daunted by such an appearance.

Mabel had by this time met Sir Valentine many times, almost with as much confidence as she had known at their first interviews, for she had neither seen nor heard of her noble gallant and the villains his associates, since her escape. The young knight, at his earliest convenience, had rode to the house for the express purpose of punishing the traitor for his intended villainy, when he found the place shut up close and deserted, and none could tell him where its late inmates had gone; from which it was argued they had left that part of the country out of fear their offences had been discovered. Nevertheless, it was not till recently the poor foundling could hazard herself by walking in the park, as she had used; though, to make her venturing as secure as possible, Sir Valentine, from a neighbouring

eminence, watched, on a fleet steed, her coming and returning. In truth, the chiefest pleasure she had was meeting this gallant gentleman; and she could think of no evil when she found him leading of his palfrey by the bridle, walking at her side in some retired part of the grounds; or having tied the animal to a branch, standing by her under the shelter of a neighbouring tree, entertaining of her with his choice discourse. Still did she listen with manifest disrelish to whatever the young knight reported of his friend, and the more admired the honourableness of the speaker without caring a whit for the object of his eulogy. She had noticed that of late such tender gallantries as he had been accustomed to exhibit, he had altogether withdrawn, and this she regarded with especial uneasiness. He was always repeating his friend's opinion of her, and ceased to say one word of his own thoughts on that subject; and this behaviour in him pleased her not at all. She often considered the matter very intently, and upon coming to the conclusion she had become indifferent to him, it put her into a great discomfort. It hath already been said she had some pride in her—pride in its gracefulest shape—and at such instigation it was like to be called into action; but if it did shew itself, it came so garmented in humility, that none would have known it for what it was, save those nobler natures with whom such appearances are familiar.

"I am much grieved at noticing of this change in you," said Mabel to her companion, on one occasion. "If you think of me unworthily, methinks it would more become your gallant disposition to tell me in what I am amiss, or go seek the company of some more proper person. Should I have lost your esteem I cannot be fit for your society."

"O' my life, I do esteem you above all creatures!" exclaimed the young knight, fervently, and then, as if recollecting of himself, added, "For one that is so highly esteemed of my noble friend, cannot but be worthy of my highest estimation."

"Truly, I would rather you rated me at your own judgment, than followed the appreciation of any other," observed the beautiful foundling, in something like a tone of disappointment.

"Then, be assured, I rate you at a value immeasurably beyond all other estimation!" earnestly exclaimed Sir Valentine.

"Indeed!" murmured the delighted Mabel.

"I mean—I would so esteem you, were I the worthy Sir Reginald," added the young knight, quickly.

"Ah, me! it is ever Sir Reginald with you!" cried his fair companion, in evident dejectedness. "Against Sir Reginald's worthiness I could not say one word, because you have affirmed it; but I do declare to you, for the hundredth time, I heed it no more than if I never heard of it."

"But surely you will not allow his honourable regard of you to come to an unprofitable ending?" said Sir Valentine, in a famous moving manner. "O' my life, he deserveth not his fortunes should be of such desperate issue. I beseech you, think better of his princely qualities. I pray you, have proper consideration of his noble character."

"'Tis impossible that I can regard him as he is desirous I should," observed the other.

"And why not?" enquired the young knight. "Allow me at least the privilege of asking your reason for leaving to intolerable wretchedness, one who would devote his heart to your service?"

"Tell him," said Mabel, sinking of her voice almost to a whisper—"tell him, I regard another so entirely, no one else can have footing in my thoughts."

"Alack, what ill news for him!" exclaimed Sir Valentine. "But think me not over bold at asking of you, is he so worthy—is he so noble—is he so valiant a knight, and so true a gentleman, as my poor friend?"

"Ay, that is he, I am assured!" cried the poor foundling, with an earnestness that came from the heart.

"Truly, I thought not such another existed," replied the young knight. "Indeed, I would willingly go any distance to meet with so estimable a person."

"Mathinks you need not go far to find him," murmured Mabel, as she bent her looks so upon the ground her long eye-lashes appeared perfectly closed. Sir Valentine was silent for some few minutes. He could not mistake the meaning of her words. At first the gratification they gave him was beyond conception exquisite; but then followed the reflection, how poorly he would be playing the part he had undertaken, did he attempt in any way to take advantage of the confession she had just made.

"In all honesty, I must say, this person you so honour hath not a tithe of the merit of Sir Reginald," said the young knight, in a voice that faltered somewhat. "Neither in the suitable accomplishments of a knight, nor in the honourable gifts of a man, can he for a moment be compared with my gallant friend. I beseech you, let not one so little worthy of your regard, receive of you the estimation which should only belong to one so truly deserving of it as the noble Sir Reginald."

"I see! I see!" exclaimed the poor foundling, exceedingly moved by this speech of her companion. "You cannot disguise it from me, strive you ever so. I have fallen from your esteem. I have lost your respect. Fare you well, sweet sir. This must be our last meeting. I hold your noble qualities too deeply in my reverence to allow of their stand-

ing hazard of debasement by their association with any unworthiness."

In vain the young knight gave her all manner of assurances she was the highest in his esteem—in vain he sought the help of entreaties and persuasions she would stay and hear his reasons for his so behaving, she seemed bent on leaving him that moment, with a full determination never to see him more. At last, however, she yielded so far as to promise to meet him the next evening at the same place, for the last time, and then returned home in a greater sadness than she had ever known. From that hour to the hour appointed for this final interview, Sir Valentine passed in considering what course he should adopt under these trying circumstances. On one side was the happiness of his absent friend entrusted to his custody—on the other, the affections of a most beautiful sweet creature he had obtained by seeking of her society. Honour demanded of him he should not do his friend disadvantage, and love entreated he would not abandon his mistress now that he had completely won her heart. The more he thought the less easy seemed his duty, for he saw that in each case if he attended to the claim of one it would destroy every hope of the other.

Mabel was true to her appointment. Sir Valentine rode up to her, and as usual tied his horse to a branch. The customary greetings passed, and the

young knight observed that his fair companion looked wondrous pale and agitated.

"What hath so moved you?" enquired he, courteously.

"Hitherto I have thought myself safe from further molestation from the villains into whose power I once fell," replied Mabel. "But I have just discovered that they are again pursuing of their treacherous intentions."

"I pray you, tell me where I may find them," said Sir Valentine, with a most earnest eagerness. "I promise you they shall molest you no longer."

"I thank you with all my heart!" exclaimed the poor foundling fervently; "yet your interference can be of no avail at this time. The very traitor who bore me forcibly from this park, and from whose base grasp you previously rescued me in the gardens at Kenilworth, is now being entertained by Sir Thomas Lucy."

"Surely, Sir Thomas when he is told of his baseness, will drive him from his house!" observed the young knight.

"He will hear of nothing against him—nor will Dame Lucy," answered Mabel. "They say I am mistaken, though I could swear to him among a thousand. They will have it he is a person of worship, whom they have known many years; yet I am convinced he is as paltry a wretch as ever disgraced this world."

"By this light, dear Mabel, I will go and make him confess his villainy!" cried Sir Valentine, moving, as if he would to the house on the instant.

"I beseech you, do not, sweet sir," implored his fair companion, as she caught hold of him by the arm. "Ever since my escape I have lived a most unhappy life, though never made I any complaint, for both the justice and the dame will have it I must have been greatly to blame, else none would have laid a hand on me; and say what I would, I could not persuade them of my innocency. Of all persons living they look on you with greatest suspicion, though I am certain you have given them not a shadow of cause, and your appearance at this or any time would do me more mischief than you can imagine."

"But it cannot be that you are to be left to this uncivil treatment," exclaimed the other urgently. "I will not allow of a thing so monstrous. Never heard I such unjust unnatural usage. It must not be suffered."

"Indeed it must—for there is no honest way of escaping from it as I can see," answered the poor foundling. "There is some scheme afoot I feel assured, else why is the caitiff there—and that evil is intended me by it, I have had more than sufficient proofs, or I should not have known him to be the villain he is; but as yet I know not in what shape it will come. I am in terrible apprehension

of the worst, yet I see not how I can avoid it if it visit me."

"There is one way," said Sir Valentine, whose feelings had been put into such extreme excitement he could think of nothing but the safety of the fair creature who seemed now so completely thrown on him for protection. "There is but one way, dearest Mabel," repeated he, in a fonder tone than he had allowed himself to use a long while. "If you have that regard for me you have expressed, and will not be moved to favour my friend's suit, I beseech you honour me to that extent as would lead you to trust your happiness to my keeping; and I promise by the word of a true knight, I will carry you from the evils with which you are threatened, to the sure refuge of my kinsman's house, where without delay I will give myself that firm title to be your protector which can only be gained from the honourable bonds of marriage."

"Marriage!" repeated Mabel, with a more unhappy aspect than she had yet shewn. "Surely you have been all this time in a strange ignorance; and I too — methinks I have been in a dream. That word hath fully wakened me. I see now and for the first time, how I have been dressing up my heart in shadows. Oh, how great hath been my folly! I have sought what I thought an innocent pleasure from sources as far above my reach as are the stars. Alas, what extreme thoughtlessness! What marvellous self-delusion!"

"What meaneth this?" enquired the young knight, full of wonder at this sudden change in her.

"Know you not, honourable sir, I am only a poor foundling!" asked Mabel earnestly. "Have you not heard I am a mere friendless creature, picked up by chance, and fostered by charity?"

"In very truth I have not," replied Sir Valentine, surprised at hearing such intelligence.

"Then such I am," said the poor foundling, "Nay, I am so poorly off, that even the very name I bear is a stranger's gift. Mother or father have I never known; and such is my mean estate that I cannot claim kindred with any of ever so humble a sort. Oh, I would you had known of this before. I am much to blame for not telling you of it sooner; but in all honesty, sweet sir, it never entered my thoughts."

"That I have remained ignorant of what you have just told me, is mine own fault only," replied her companion. "But I cannot think of drawing back from my engagements at such a discovery. Rich or poor, noble or simple, you are the same admirable fair creature I have so long loved, and that hath honoured me with her regard, therefore if you will trust yourself to my care, doubt not of obtaining at least the respect my poor name can bestow upon you."

"It cannot be!" exclaimed the other, determinedly. "I could never do you so notable a

wrong as to thrust my meanness into your honourable family. I could not bear you to be ashamed of me, and such it must needs come to when any put question to you of your wife's lineage. Oh, I now see more and more how ill I have acted in seeking of your society. I enjoyed the present moment totally regardless of the bar between us, that divided our fortunes an impassable distance. I beseech you to forgive me, honourable sir. As quickly as you can, forget that one of such humble fortunes as your unhappy Mabel ever existed. I would not I should give you a moment's uneasiness. As for myself, whatever may be my wretched fate, or however degraded my condition, I shall have a happiness in my thoughts which will ever rank me with the most worthy, for I can remember I have attained to such proud elevation as to be the love of the noblest, truest, and most perfect gentleman fond heart ever loved."

"Dearest! sweetest life!" cried Sir Valentine, passionately clasping her in his embraces. Mabel for a few moments allowed herself to receive his endearments, then suddenly tore herself from his arms, looking more pale and sad than before.

"This must not be," exclaimed she, with a desperate effort, as she motioned him back. "If you will not break my heart, I pray you—I beseech you, honourable sir, grant me one request."

"Willingly," replied the young knight, for tears were on her eyelids, and she looked on him so movingly he could have refused her nothing.

"Never approach me again," said the hapless Mabel, in a voice almost stifled by her feelings. "Nay," exclaimed she, with more firmness, as she noticed he appeared about to speak, "if you hold me in any respect—if I am not the abject thing in your eyes, I am with the rest of the world, seek not to hinder me in my resolution. I must see you no more. I cannot—will not allow of another meeting. On reflection, your own honourable nature will assure you that this is as much for my welfare as your own. Care not for me, only so far as this may be your consolation, that, however servile may be my state, though I become the veriest drudge that ever lived out a life of miserable slavery, still shall I remain the creature you have honoured with your love. I will endure all things to live in such honesty as I have known hitherto. I implore you, if you value my peace of mind, regard my last wish. Attempt not to detain me here a moment longer. I must leave you.—Fare you well, sir.—From the very depths of my heart I thank you for your extreme goodness to me. May the sweetest happiness that should crown such nobleness as yours wait upon all your doings. Again, and for the last time, honourable sir!—fare you well!"

"Mabel! dear, sweet Mabel! I beseech you leave me not thus! I will not live without you! I cannot love another!"

"Truly, this is playing a friend's part, Sir Valentine!" cried Sir Reginald, rudely grasping the young knight by the arm, as he seemed about to follow the retreating Mabel. "Why, thou pitiful traitor! thou shame to knighthood—thou dishonour to friendship! What demon hath tempted thee to such villainous doings? By my troth, now, had I not seen this with mine own eyes, I would never have believed it."

Sir Valentine was a little confounded at the unexpected appearance of his friend; and knowing the circumstances in which he had been found, he was sensible they gave colour to Sir Reginald's accusation he might find it difficult to remove. "Indeed, I am but little to blame, Sir Reginald," replied he; "and I doubt not you will acknowledge it readily, when you have heard all I have to say to you."

"Doubtless," observed the other, in a manner somewhat sarcastic; "I go on a distant journey, placing such confidence in thy seeming honourableness as to entrust thee with the furthering of my suit to my mistress during my absence; and I return to find thee basely seeking to rob me of my happiness, by proffering her thine own affections. Truly, thou art but little to blame!"

"I do assure you, Sir Reginald——"

"Fie, sir!" exclaimed his companion roughly. "Thou hast a rapier—methinks thou shouldst know the use of it. Leave thy tongue, and take to a fitter weapon." And so saying he drew his own from its scabbard.

"By all that's honourable in knighthood——"

"What!" exclaimed the other, fiercely interrupting him; "wouldst play the coward as well as the villain! wouldst do me such foul wrong as thou hast been about, and then shrink from the punishment thou hast so justly deserved? O' my conscience, I thought not so mean a wretch was to be found. Draw, ca'tiff, without a word more, or I will beat thee like a dog."

"As Heaven is my witness, I entertain this quarrel most reluctantly," said Sir Valentine, drawing out his rapier. "I cannot see that I have wronged you in any way; and I am convinced you would be the first to say so, knew you all that hath happened."

"To thy defence, sirrah!" replied Sir Reginald, angrily. "I am not to be cozened out of a proper vengeance." And at this he began very furiously to thrust at his companion, who sought only to defend himself, which he did with such skill, that his opponent got more enraged every moment, and gave him all manner of ill words; but still Sir Valentine kept on his defence, and would not so much

as make a single pass at his friend. This continued till Sir Reginald, pressing on with desperate haste, fell on his opponent's rapier with his whole force.

"Alack, what have I done!" exclaimed the young knight, as he beheld his faithful companion in arms drop bleeding to the ground. "Oh, I have slain the noblest knight that ever wielded spear, and the truest friend that ever was sincere to man. O' my life, I meant to do you no hurt, and I can say with the same honesty I have done you no offence." Finding he got no answer, he knelt beside his wounded friend, and took his hand, and entreated him very movingly he would not die at enmity with him, if he was as dangerously hurt as he seemed. Still he received no reply, which put him almost in a frenzy, by assuring him he had killed him. Finding, however, that Sir Reginald breathed, he very carefully took him in his arms, and placed him so that he might recline against the broad stem of a neighbouring tree, and then leaping on his steed, he started off at the top of his speed to get the necessary assistance.

CHAPTER X.

No wher so beey a man as he ther n'as,
And yet he semed besier than he was.

CHAUCER.

How that foolish man,
That reads the story of a woman's face,
And dies believing it, is lost for ever:
How all the good you have is but a shadow,
I' the morning with you, and at night behind you,
Past and forgotten. How your vows are frosts
Fast for a night, and with the next sun gone:
How you are, being taken all together,
A mere confusion, and so dead a chaos,
That love cannot distinguish.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

I washed an Ethiopie, who, for recompense,
Sully'd my name. And must I then be forced
To walk, to live, thus black! Must! must!—Fie!
He that can bear with "must," he cannot die.

MARSTON.

THE love of the youthful Shakspeare for the yeoman's blooming daughter flourished the more, the more it was fed by her sunny glances, and in these, he basked as often as he could find opportunity; but, at this period, his visits to the cottage were mostly late at night, when her father and the children were asleep in their beds. This arose from a cause which must here be described. He was now growing towards man's estate, and it often

occurred to him, when he was in his own little chamber, fitted by himself with his own two or three books on a shelf—a chair for sitting—a little table for writing on—and a truckle bed for his lying,—that he ought to be doing of something for himself, and so save his poor parents the burthen of his provision. Such reflections would come upon him, when he had been wearing away the deep midnight with anxious study; and so one morning, having come to a resolution, he dressed himself with all neatness, and bent his steps towards Jemmy Catchpole's, whom he had heard was in want of some one, to copy papers and parchment and such things. He saw the little lawyer, after waiting a monstrous time in a low narrow chamber, whereof it was difficult to say whether the boards or the ceiling were in the dirtiest state, who, hearing of his errand, made him write as he dictated, at which he looked very intently, and though it was as fair a specimen of penmanship as might be seen any where, he found wonderful fault with it. However, the end of it was, Jemmy Catchpole offered to employ the youth, and for his services give him a knowledge of the law for the first year or so; and after that, should he have made any reasonable progress in his studies, he would pay him a handsome wage. This offer was gladly accepted, for although he could gain no present profit by it, his sanguine nature saw in it a most bountiful prospect.

Behold him now, in that den of a place just alluded to, surrounded by musty parchments and mouldering papers, with scarce ever any other company than the rats and the spiders, sitting on a tottering stool at a worm-eaten desk, writing from the early morning till late into the evening, save at such times as he was allowed to get his meals, or to go of errands for his employer. It was about this time that he began to take especial note of the humours of men, wherever he could get sight of them; marking in his mind that distinctiveness in the individual, which made him differ from his fellows; and observing, with quite as much minuteness, the manner in which the professions of his acquaintances were in accordance or in opposition to their ways of living. By this peculiar curiousness of his, he took characters as a limner taketh portraits, having each feature so set down from the original, that he could carry such about with him wherever he went. This he had certain facilities of doing in his new occupation, as, finding him exceeding apt, the lawyer soon employed him as his assistant wherever he went, which brought him into every sort of company; for Jemmy Catchpole had every body's business on his hands, or, at least, he made many think so, and he bustled about from place to place, as if the world must needs stand still unless he gave it his help.

Such occasions, and the observations he drew

from them, afforded the youthful Shakspeare some little amusement in the dulness of his present life. What books the lawyer had, related only to his own particular vocation. The papers and parchments were the dryest stuff that ever was read or written ; even the very atmosphere of the chamber seemed to breathe of law ; and as for Jemmy Catchpole, his talk was a mere patchwork of law phrases, that required considerable familiarity with legal instruments to make the slightest sense of. In fact, the little lawyer had so used himself to such a style in his writings and readings, that it was impossible for him to talk, think, or write, in any other. The tediousness of this was sometimes almost insupportable to the young poet, and he only made it tolerable by the occasional writing of some sweet ballad of his fair mistress, when he should be engrossing a sheet of parchment for his busy master.

But then, after all this weary labour, how famously did he enjoy his midnight meetings with the sprightly Anne Hathaway. There would they stand together, under the friendly shadow of the walnut-tree before the cottage, in such loving fashion as I never can sufficiently describe, till the stars disappeared, and the sun's crimson pennon began to peep above the eastern hills. Nothing in imagination can come at all nigh to the passionate earnestness of his manner at these times. It came to the ear

of the enraptured maiden, in a resistless torrent of eloquence that swept down all denyings. There appeared a breathing fire in his words that made the air all around to glow with a delicious warmth ; and his looks beamed with such exceeding brilliance, that to the enamoured damsel they made his beautiful clear countenance like unto the picture of some saint, clothed with a continual halo. It was not possible for the most scrupulous discreet creature to have resisted so earnest a wooer, therefore it cannot be considered in any way strange, that the fond nature of the blooming Anne should have acknowledged his complete influence. It so happened, that after passing the hours in such delicate pleasure as such a lover was likely to produce, on his taking leave of her, he sung the following words to a pleasant tune that had long been a favourite of his. The song was thus styled in a copy he gave to her soon after :—

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE'S GOOD NIGHT
TO HIS SOUL'S MISTRESS.

“ Good night, sweet life ! yet, dearest, say,
How can that night be good to me,
That drives me from my bliss away,
Whilst taking off mine eyes from thee ?
Good night !—the hours so swift are fleeting,
We find no time to mark their flight ;
And having known such joy in meeting,
’Tis hard to say—Good night ! good night !

Good night, sweet life ! ere daylight beams,
And sleep gives birth to hopes divine,
May I be present in thy dreams,
And blessed as thou shalt be in mine.
Good night ! yet still I fondly linger ;
I go, but do not leave thy sight :
Though morning shews her rosy finger,
I murmur still—Good night ! good night !”

This was the song, simple though it may be ; but his impassioned manner of singing it, which clothed every word with unutterable passion, I cannot give.

“ I tell thee what it is, friend Will,” exclaimed a familiar voice from an open casement above them, so much to the astonishment of the lovers that they started from the affectionate closeness of their position on a sudden ; “ if thou wilt not come a wooing at decent hours, or dost again wake me out of my sleep with the singing of love-songs, I’ll have none of thy company. And I tell thee what it is, Mistress Anne,—if thou allowest of such loud kissing, thou wilt alarm the whole country within a mile of thee !”

“ Heart o’ me, father, how you talk !” cried the blushing criminal. John Hathaway closed the casement and returned to his bed, chuckling like one who had just succeeded in playing off some exquisite pleasant jest.

About this period the youthful Shakspeare was ever meeting John a Combe, and though he could scarce be got to speak to any other person in the

town, save on business, John a Combe never failed to accost the young poet whenever they met. It was evident each took pleasure in the other's society; for although Master Combe was marvellous bitter in his speech upon all occasions, he was ever betraying to the close observance of his companion, a kindness of nature which the latter could well appreciate. He suspected that beneath this covering of gall and wormwood the sweet honey of humanity lay in exhaustless heaps; and knowing of his history, and his former greatness of soul, he was exceeding curious to learn the secret cause that had made him apparently so changed a man. Once, when he met him, the usurer made him promise to call at his house immediately he had done his labours of the day, as he wished to see him on a matter of deep importance. William Shakspeare promised, and that evening, instead of going to his mistress, he was found seated in John a Combe's chamber, where one candle gave just sufficient light to make the cheerlessness of the place most conspicuous. The usurer sat before him, with that restless look and manner with which a man who has determined to do a thing which he likes not, prepares to set about it.

"I've heard thou art playing the lover--is't true?" enquired he, in his usual sharp voice.

"Most undeniable," replied the young poet with a smile.

"O' my life I did not think thou hadst such marvellous lack of brains," observed the other. "Wouldst cater for thine own misery?—Wouldst build thy towering Babel to the skies, to end in the utter confusion of thy thoughts? Have more discretion."

"Indeed I find in it so sweet a happiness, I would not abandon it at any price," said his companion, with all the fervour of a true lover.

"Is not the poison sweetened to attract the fly!" exclaimed the usurer more earnestly. "I tell thee thou shouldst avoid the temptation as thou wouldst a pestilence. It will destroy thee, body and soul. It will madden thy brain and wither thy heart,—make thy blood a consuming fire, and thy life an intolerable wretchedness!"

"Truly I have no such fear," replied the youthful Shakspeare.

"When does youth fear when there is a fair prospect before it!" cried John a Combe. "What a desperate folly it is. Point out the gaping precipice within its path, it will go madly forward. Of a surety nature might well wear a robe of motley, for she presideth over a goodly company of fools. I tell thee, boy, there is no such danger as that thou seemest so enamoured of; and if nothing else will turn thee from thy destruction, I will unfold to thee the story of mine own fearful experience of this blight upon humanity."

William Shakspeare listened in silence, for, as hath been said, he had a strange curiousness to know what his companion had promised.

“ I require of thee, first of all, that thou declarest to none one word of the secret I am about to entrust to thee.” The young poet readily made his assurance he would not repeat a syllable; and presently the usurer continued his narration in these words:—

“ Perchance thou hast heard of one John a Combe, whose goodness of heart was the theme of all of his acquaintance. I was that John a Combe. I had such store of love in my breast that I scattered it far and wide, and yet it seemed to grow the greater the more it was so squandered. No matter what evil I might see, I regarded it only as the weeds in a corn field, surrounded by such bountiful provision of good that it was scarce worthy the observation of any person of a thankful nature. My youth was cherished with such pleasing feelings. My manhood flourished upon the same teeming soil. I sought to sow benefits broadcast wherever there was place and opportunity; and found, or fancied I found, the crop amply repay me for the labour. I made friends wherever I met faces. All men seemed to me my brothers; and every woman I looked upon as a domestic deity deserving honourable worship. At last I met with one man who regarded me as an enemy. I strove to win him to

better feelings, and failed. He essayed to destroy me in honest battle—I disarmed him and went my way unhurt. He then tried to rob me of my life by treachery; but here he was both baffled and punished, whilst I remained as uninjured as at first. He was a demon—a fiend of hell let loose on earth.

“I had met with many women seeming in every way worthy of my love, and shewing such signs as proved I should have no great difficulty in the winning of their affections: but my soul was somewhat curious in the pursuit of female excellence. It must needs have a phoenix. It would not be satisfied with what appeared good—it strove to procure possession of the best. I sought for such an object, for a long time unavailingly. At last in a neighbouring town I met with one who seemed all I required. She was of a poor family, the daughter of a man supporting himself and her by the profits of a humble trade. She was fair—young—of gentle manners, and of a winning modest innocency. What more could be wanted? On further acquaintance her merits rose in greater conspicuousness, and the perfect simplicity of her disposition won on me more and more every day. Was not this a phoenix?—a phoenix that rose from the flames her brilliant beauty raised in my heart. I grew enamoured; and she with an admirable delicacy retired from my advances. I persevered, and saw in her some faint signs I was making way in her esteem. Still there

was such sweet air of purest chastity in her every action, it kept me a worshipper at so respectful a distance, I could not believe my success to be in any certainty.

“What did I do upon this. I determined to take every opportunity of studying her nature, with the hope of so moulding it to my ideas of womanly excellence, I should by possessing her, secure myself a life of such exceeding happiness the most blessed could have but little notion of. To say I loved her, methinks is scarce to say enough, yet of the mere outward shew of passion I afforded the world so little, none could have believed I had been so desperately enamoured. It was that nice sense of delicacy in her, and modest shrinking from familiar praise, that took me captive. To win her love I strove with all the earnestness of manhood flushed with its proudest energies. But how to win it was the question. I would not purchase it by gifts, for that suited not my humour. I would only have it to come as the price of her appreciation of my merit, for then I thought I could the better count on its sincerity and duration. With this fine fantasy of mine, I would not let her know I was in such good estate as I really was. I affected some humbleness of fortune, thinking by gaining her in such guise I should be sure that no alloy of selfishness could mingle with the pure sterling of her love.

“I took up my abode in her father’s house to

have the fullest means of completing my honest purpose. She seemed to grow under my hand like a flower of my own planting. She began to regard me with a softer tenderness. I doubled my assiduity, and she gradually warmed into a graceful fondness; yet in all that she did or said there was so exquisite an artlessness, I was more charmed than had she been a thousand times more affectionate without such simple colouring. I loved more and more. At last the crowning of all my toil, I gained from her the much longed-for confession—the treasure of her regard was mine and mine alone. I did not betray myself even then, delighted as I was beyond all measure; but I resolved the next day to leave the house, return in my true character as speedily as I might, and, before all her acquaintance, wed her with such honourable ceremony as worth like her's deserved. I thought my bliss complete, and my gratitude to the author of it knew no bounds.

“I slept in a chamber directly under hers, and often as I lay in my bed have I enjoyed most exquisite sweet pleasure in hearing her gentle footsteps pass my door, and up the stairs to her sweet rest—to which, in consequence, as she told me, of her household labours, she was the last to retire of any in the house. That night thinking of my great happiness to come, I kept awake longer than had been customary with me; and all at once I mar-

velled I had not yet heard her light footfalls, for it was far beyond her usual time of coming up stairs. Another hour passed by and yet no sign of her coming. I began to get somewhat alarmed, as lovers will upon anything out of the ordinary in their mistress's behaviour. At last when I had nigh worked myself into a fever with imagining of all sorts of dangers that might have happened to her, to my infinite joy I heard her softly approaching my door. Almost at the same instant I heard other footsteps ascending with her. In the next moment I distinguished a slight whispering in a strange voice. Then two persons together proceeded past my door—together they ascended the stairs—together they entered her chamber—the door was locked—and I could then distinctly hear above me, mingled with her light footfall and gentle voice, the full deep tones and heavy step of a man.

“ At this discovery I started up as though I had been bit by an adder—the bed shook under the fierce trembling of my limbs—my heart beat in my breast as a madman rushes against his prison bars—my veins seemed filled with flame, and my brain scorching with fire; and a hot blighting wind appeared so to fill the place around me, I breathed as though every breath would be my last. But this was but the beginning of my tortures. Had I possessed the power of moving I would

have done a deed of just vengeance, which should have remained a monument of terror unto the end of time ; but I was there like one chained, having no other senses but those of hearing and feeling. Talk of the sufferings of the damned, what were they to the agonies I endured. Lash me with scorpions—plunge me into everlasting fires—goad me with serpents' stings—strain every nerve and artery with pullies, racks and wheels—'tis but a mere ordinary aching in comparison. At last nature could hold out no longer, and all sensation left me.

“ When I recovered consciousness, the sun was streaming in at my casement ; but it was no sun for me. I was no more the man I had been twelve hours before, than is a withered bud a blooming flower. I was blind to all sense of good. A perpetual darkness took possession of mine eyes—my veins held a running poison—the sweet feelings of humanity had turned to a sourness that corroded their vessels—all my hopes were consumed to ashes, and scattered to the four winds ; and all my belief in the existence of the worthiness of humanity burst like a bubble in the air, leaving no sign to tell that such a thing had ever appeared. Wherever I looked I spied the darkness of a sepulchre—wherever I moved I smelt the filth of a charnel. Villainy was branded on every face. Craft made its dwelling in every habitation. I saw the world

intent on my destruction. I declared war against the whole human race.

"I took counsel with myself, and determined before I left that hateful place to discover one thing. I had dressed myself in readiness to set about the fulfilment of my resolution, when who should make her appearance but the object of my late care and regard—my phoenix ! my best among the excellent ! Towards me she came looking as simple, innocent, pure, and artless as she had looked from the beginning. I managed by a desperate effort to keep me a calm countenance, though there raged so fierce a tempest within me as beggareth all description.

"She sat herself down as usual, and with her customary gentle kindliness commenced asking concerning of my health. I calmly drew a chair next to hers, quietly seated myself as near to her as I could—quickly seized one of her wrists in each hand, and with my face close to her own, looked into her eyes as though I would read there the deepest secret of her soul. She shrunk from my scrutiny with every sign of conscious guilt. I then poured out on her the pent-up flood of my contempt, indignation, and abhorrence ; and she trembled in pallid shame. I saw she was humbled to the dust with fear, and rung from her reluctant lips the whole history of her infamy. It was a common case. An excess of vanity, disguised by matchless

craft, made her seek to become above her natural station. She sought to be the envy of her companions, by wearing of such ornaments as they could not obtain. These she cared not to get honestly, though she employed an exhaustless stock of artifice to make it appear they were so acquired. The tempter was at hand, ready to take advantage of her evil-disposedness. A few trinkets and other pretty baubles, with a fair commodity of oaths and flatteries, completed the bargain. The price paid, she sold herself, body and soul. Still I stopped not here. I insisted on the name of her companion in iniquity. After a while she gave it. It was mine enemy.

“He had seen where I had stored up all my hopes—he had noticed my infinite pains-taking to make my happiness complete—he had watched—eagerly—delightedly watched the progress of the enamoured game I was playing, till I had staked every thought and feeling on the issue; and then he came with his damnable base villainy, and so cheated me, I not only lost what I had staked, but lost myself as well. At the mention of his name I flung her from me like a toad: and as the fear-struck wretch lay prostrate before me, I heaped on her guilty soul the abundant measure of my honest execrations. She hid her face in her hands, and writhed like a bruised worm; but I left her not till I had exhausted every term of infamy and scorn I

had at my will. Doubtless, though the next hour she went about wearing of the same simple, artless, innocent countenance as first attracted me; and as token of her worthiness, exhibited to her envious companions the letters and verses of my writing, wherein I bestowed on her that estimable rare clothing with which true love delighteth to attire its deity:—and, I make no manner of question, hath since palmed herself off on others, as she strove to do with me, as the purest, kindest, and best among the most admirable of her sex.

“As for the villain who did me this intolerable wrong, I sought him in all places, but he managed to elude the strictness of my search. If there remain for me one glimpse of happiness in this world, it can only come when I shall toss his body to the ravens, and leave his bones a crumbling monument of matchless perfidy, to whiten in the blast. Bowed down, as I am, with the weight of those memories which crush my humanity to the dust, my arm seems nerved, and all my limbs clothed with a giant's power, whenever I see in my mind's eye the arrival of my day of vengeance. I know it will come. Nature hath been outraged beyond all previous example. The punishment shall be in proportion to the offence. The breath of life is kept within my miserable frame only by an unconquerable desire to execute this natural decree; and till that longed-for time shall come, the scorn, the de-

testation, the hatred, the contempt, the disgust, the loathing and abhorrence that bubbles from my heart, will fall, for want of being discharged upon its proper object, upon those who have the ill hap to come within my influence.

“Boy!” exclaimed John a Combe, in a voice scarce audible from the greatness of his emotions, “when I think of what I might have become, and behold what I am, my heart feels as if it would shiver in my breast. There are many who may still remember me in my better days, but I doubt they knew the happiness I had then in myself and my doings. From philanthropy to usury is a huge step; yet I took it at a bound. Mayhap I am mad—I have had cause enough for it—but I can assert of a certainty, I am—most miserable.”

William Shakspeare had listened to the preceding narration with exceeding interest; but the last few words were spoken with such a touching earnestness, he was more deeply moved than ever he had been in his life before. He saw this was no case for common consolations—he therefore attempted nothing of the sort.

“Never breathe to me a word of woman’s honourableness,” continued the usurer, with increased earnestness. “This creature, that I had worshipped with so pure a spirit, whose worthiness I exalted above all virtue, and whose excellence I so honoured, it outtopped every example of goodness, not only

did me this inhuman wrong out of her own infinite baseness; but as soon as I had rid myself of her infamous society, she took to slandering me with the coarse, vile colouring of the blackest malice—thinking, by so doing, my testimony of her shame would not be believed. I alone had knowledge of her evil doing—the fear which guilt produces continually haunted her—and she strove to save her reputation by destroying mine. She gave out I had sought to use her dishonestly, so she would have none of me; and accused me of such horrible behaving as none but the degraded, debased thing she had made herself, could have conceived. Here, then, was I, by my abundant love of virtue, and prodigal generousness, in seeking to make others happy, stripped hopeless—and then daubed with the pitch of infamy! I have said nought of this matter hitherto, believing I might escape the outstretched finger, and the reviling eye, of the unjust world, by a strict secrecy. My pride would not allow of my offering one word in my own defence, convinced that men's minds have such an inclination for villainy, they will readily entertain it, let it come in any shape. No where will there be found any sympathy for abused confidence, for the man that is deceived is looked upon as a poor weak fool, that should have had more wit than to have suffered such cozening.

“I felt convinced that every one around me were

striving to get to a knowledge of my secret, that they might enjoy the pleasure of thinking ill of me, so I was beforehand with them—abused all, and kept all from the slightest approach to that familiarity which they desired should lead to contempt. But what a life is this I am living! and when I behold thy fresh young nature pursuing the same course which mine hath gone, have I not reason to fear it will come to a like dreadful ending? Boy! look at me, and pause in thy career. I have been as thou art now—a worshipper of fair appearances. I loved the goodly garnishing of the bright world, and would have rushed against a thousand levelled spears in defence of its integrity. Thou seest me here, decrepid in my prime, inwardly affected with a moral leprosy, that eateth my heart to the core—outwardly, one entire sore, that causeth me to shrink from the world as from a scorching fire. I am at strife with my fellows—I am at war with myself—the day bringeth no peace for me—the night no repose. Merciful God!” exclaimed the unhappy usurer, in his deep frenzy, clasping his hands together, with a wild look of agony and supplication. “Is there no peace for the guiltless?—Is there nought but perpetual torture for the doer of good? Tear not my heart strings with so rude a grasp! I have wronged none. I have loved all. I have worshipped fervently each excellent evidence of thy perfect handiwork. Let not mine enemy

prevail against me. He hath done me most intolerable injury. Pity for my undeserved sufferings! Justice against the villainy that produced them! Mercy! help! vengeance!"

Shouting these last words in the most piercing tones, John a Combe tottered forward a few steps, and, before his young companion could reach the place where he was, fell exhausted upon the floor.

CHAPTER XI.

Is this your manly service ?
A devil scorns to do it.

MASSINGER.

O sacred innocence ! that sweetly sleeps
On turtles' feathers, whilst a guilty conscience
Is a black register, wherein is writ
All our good deeds and bad—a perspective
That shews us hell.

WEBSTER.

Drink to-day, and drown all sorrow,
You shall, perhaps, not do it to-morrow.
Best while you have it use your breath ;
There is no drinking after death.

BEN JONSON.

Now, whether it were providence, or luck,
Whether the keeper's or the stealer's buck,
There we had venison.

BISHOP CORBET.

“ SEE that this plot of thine have a more profitable issue than thy preceding ones.”

“ It cannot fail, my lord, it is so cunningly devised.”

“ So thou saidst of the others, yet I reaped no advantage of them.”

“ That was owing to no fault of mine, believe me, but to circumstances which, as it was clean

impossible they could be foreseen of the piercingest wit, it is plain they could not have been prevented."

Thus spoke two of whom the reader hath already some acquaintance—to wit, the licentious noble and his villainous assistant; and they were sitting together in a small mean chamber of an obscure inn in the neighbourhood of Charlcote—the former, as usual, so closely wrapped up, as if he feared being recognized; and the other in finer feather than he had ever been in before, as though he was intent in playing some exceeding gallant part.

"I marvel, my lord, you should waste so much labour on so poor an object," observed the meaner villain. "Methinks you might have won a nobler prize at half the pains. Indeed, I have been credibly informed this Mabel is nothing better than a very mean person—a mere foundling—mayhap the chance offspring of vulgar parents—that hath now become a sort of humble servant to the good dame by whom she was discovered."

"Dost tell me this story, fellow!" exclaimed his companion, rising from his seat with most haughty indignant glances. "Why, where hath flown thy wits, that thou couldst credit so shallow a tale?—Foundling! o' my life, I would gladly give a thousand crowns to pick up such a foundling but once or twice in my life. Vulgar parentage! By this hand, I have seen her wear so regal an air with her, as Elizabeth, in her proudest mood, never came up

to. Servant ! Hast noted her look and move, and speak with that unrivalled dignity she possesseth, and talk so idly ? 'Slife, thy brains are addled."

The gallant looked all humbleness. He knew it would be somewhat unprofitable to him to differ in opinion with his employer on such a matter ; so he made no more ado than to express his entire disbelief of the story he had been told, and avow he had never entertained it from the first.

" I must say this plot seemeth to me a famous good one for the purpose," observed the other, as he was making for the door. " But, mark me, if that knave of thine lay but his sacrilegious finger on her, I'll cut him to shreds ! "

" Be assured, my lord, every thing shall be done according to your noble wishes," replied his associate. Soon afterwards both mounted their horses at the door, the noble then started off in one direction, and the other, accompanied by the same ill-looking fellow, that had dealt William Shakspeare so fierce a blow in the park, at Charlcote, took a different road. These two rode towards Sir Thomas Lucy's house, in deep and earnest converse all the way ; the former ever and anon breaking off his discourse by muttering the words " fellow," and " so my brains are addled ! " in a manner which shewed he had taken huge offence at those expressions. In another hour thy were seated with the justice in his favourite chamber, making famous cheer of

his good ale; the gallant appearing to be a marvellous great person; and his fellow, dressed in a falconer's suit of green, played the part of the honest humble serving man, that his master, out of regard for his exceeding merit, sought to make happy. He spoke seldom, and then only to praise his good master, or say some respectful speech to his worship the justice. However, his companions left him but little opportunity for much talking, had he been so inclined; for what with his master's marvellous accounts of his influence at court, and the many noble persons he was held in such esteem of, they could refuse him nothing, and Sir Thomas's still more incredible accounts of his familiar acquaintance with these notable personages in their youth, and the famous tricks he and they had played together, there was but little room for a third party to bring in a word.

We must, however, leave these worthies for the present, and accompany the courteous reader to another chamber, wherein the gentle Mabel was receiving a grave and somewhat severe lecture from Dame Lucy. The poor foundling looked pale and sad. She was striving to resign herself to the humility of her fortunes, but there was something in her nature that would not be content.

"I beseech you, sweet mistress, let me hear no more of the marriage," said she at last, in a manner pitiful enough to have moved any person. "This

man I know to be one of those who assisted to carry me off, and the other his master was the mainspring of the whole villainy."

"Did any ever hear of such presumption!" exclaimed the old dame, in a famous astonishment. "Doth not Sir Thomas declare that the gentleman hath been his good friend nigh upon this twenty year, and that the other, his chief falconer, he believes to be as honest a man as ever broke bread. Dost pretend to know more than the justice? I marvel at thy horrible impudency!"

"I cannot be mistaken, for they have given me but too good cause to hold them firmly in my remembrance," added the poor foundling.

"Here's ingratitude!" cried her ancient companion, seeming to be getting a little out of temper; "Here's obstinacy! Here's disobedience, and undutifulness to thy proper advisers. Art not ashamed to be setting thyself in opposition to thy betters, who have clothed thee, and fed thee, and given thee lodging, and made of thee a Christian? By my troth, I would not have believed such huge baseness was in the whole world."

"But I have no desire for marriage, an' it please you, good mistress," said Mabel, "methinks I am well enough as I am."

"How dost pretend to know anything of the sort," answered Dame Lucy, sharply. "Is not the justice the better judge! Hath he not said thou

art ill off, and dost dare, in the face of it, to say thou art well enough? But I see it plain. Thou art hankering after those fine fellows who met thee at Kenilworth; and would sooner be the leman of a gay gallant than the wife of an honest man. But I will put a stop to thy villainy straight. The justice hath declared thou art to marry, and to marry thou must speedily make up thy mind. I will see that thou art properly wedded with all convenient speed, and as earnest of my intentions, I will send thee the honest man who is to be thy husband. Prythee, take heed thou entertain him well."

Mabel saw her mistress leave the chamber, and sank into a seat with a mind nigh paralysed with apprehension. She had suspected, for some time, some plot was hatching by which she was to suffer, and she now saw its villainous shape and purpose. She perceived it was planned with such extreme subtlety, that it afforded scarce any chance of escape. Her thoughts were sinking into a very desperate hopelessness, when the door opened, and there entered the chamber, with a half-respectful, half-familiar look, and in an awkward clownish manner, the man that awhile since was making cheer with his master, and the justice. Mabel knew him at a glance, and in a moment, sprung to her feet, eying him with a look of scorn and detestation that appeared to discompose him somewhat. There was scarce a bolder villain in existence, yet

it was evident he felt not quite at his ease before the flashing glances of the poor foundling. He seated himself on a chair, holding his hat before him with his knees close together; and presently shifted his position, and then again changed it. Neither had spoke by word of mouth; but the looks of Mabel seemed to have the searchingest language that ever was said or written, and the villain read it, understood it, and felt it. At last he commenced speaking,—“ His worship hath had such goodness as to —— ”

“ Wretch ! ” exclaimed Mabel, interrupting him in a deep low voice, in which utter contempt seemed to breathe its most humiliating spirit; and then advancing towards him two or three steps in all the haughty dignity of virtue, continued with an eloquence of look and gesture which exceedeth all powers of description, to address him thus :—“ The spawn of the toad hath a name, the slough of the adder may be called something; but what art thou thou monster of baseness, for whom language hath no fit title. Art a man ? Manhood spits at thee ! Art a beast ? The most bestial thing that crawls, knoweth nothing of the vile office thou hast undertaken. Avaunt, thou outrage upon nature ! Away, thou shame on humanity ! Go, hide thee, if hiding thou canst find ; for if thou couldst crawl within the deepest bowels of the earth, the earth would sicken at thy touch, and cast thee up—the sea would raise

her gorge at thee—the mountains heave at thy approach—and all the elements of matter shrink from thy neighbourhood, as from an abomination too gross to be endured !”

The man winced under this address, as if every word of it had been a goad that touched him to the quick. His dark scowling eyes glanced restlessly about, he changed colour several times, and looked in that peculiar expression of indecision that betokeneth a state of mind in which a person knoweth not what to do with himself, though he would be glad to be any where but where he was.

“What desperate demon put thee on this mischief,” continued Mabel, in the same force of language and manner. “Canst seek such detestable employment and live? Hast no sense of shame? No fear of punishment? No dread of an hereafter? Look at what thou art about to do. Hold it before thy gaze unshrinkingly, if thou canst. Doth not thy soul shrink in disgust at entering upon such loathsomeness? Man! If thou hast not parted with every tittle of the decent pride of nature, spurn the outrageous infamy thou wouldst thrust thyself into. Get thee to thy employer, and tell him thou dost abhor such inhuman villainy, or thou art baser than a dog. Strive to earn his filthy wages, and thou wilt be hunted through the world like some foul fruit of monstrous practices, all nature riseth to destroy from very shame.”

The villain evidently trembled, and the big drops starting on his wrinkled forehead shewed how deeply he was moved.

“Rememberest thou, thou hadst once a mother?” added the foundling, in a deeper and more subduing tone: “think of her, friendless as I am. How wouldst thou regard the man who suffered himself to become the tool of a villainous base traitor, to secure his doing her such foul wrong as honesty stands aghast to contemplate? Wouldst not be ready to tear his heart from his breast, and trample it in the nighest dunghill, to rot with its kindred filth? Canst behold this vileness in another and not see it in thyself? Thou art the tool for compassing this mischief, and I the guiltless object at which ’tis aimed. If I have done thee any wrong I will do thee all possible reparation. If I have given thee any offence, I will endure any corresponding punishment. I charge thee, say in what I have injured thee, that thou shouldst pursue me with so unnatural a hatred!”

“Nay, sweet mistress, I have never received ill at your hands,” replied the man with a faltering voice, and a manner thoroughly ashamed. “And if I in any way assist in doing of you an injury, may I be hanged on the highest gibbet that can be found.” So saying he hurried out of the chamber so completely chap-fallen as no villain had ever

been before. He immediately sought his master, and found him alone.

"Ask of me to stab, to poison, or to rob, and I care not to refuse," exclaimed he. "But if I am caught within looking, or talking distance of that wench again, I will eat myself by handfuls. 'Slight! her words and glances have so scourged me, I would sooner have took the whipping-post the longest day o' the year, than have endured a tithe of such punishment."

"Why, thou ape, thou beast, thou fool, thou pestilent knave and coward! what dost mean by this?" cried his master in as great rage as astonishment. "Wouldst spoil the goodliest plot that ever was devised; and mar the making of our fortunes when we are sure of success?"

"Truly, I care not if I do," said the man doggedly. "But I will be no mean for the doing of her any mischief. I will assist thee in any decent villainy, but if ever I meddle with her again, I'll forswear living."

It was in vain that the other tried by promises and then by threats to turn his companion's resolution; and the result was, Mabel was left at peace till some more willing agent could be found.

In the meanwhile the passion of the youthful Shakspeare for the yeoman's blooming daughter continued to develope itself with increased fervour,

despite of the usurer's warning; and John Hathaway with his own notions of the matter, at last on one of his usual evening visits, bluntly asked him how he should like his fair mistress for a wife; whereupon, as might be expected, the young lover answered nought in this world would make him so happy. Then the father gravely enquired into his means of supporting a wife, at which his companion looked the gravest of the two, and acknowledged that all he had was the wage he received from Master Catchpole, which scarce sufficed to keep him in shoe leather; and at that the yeoman looked monstrous concerned, and began to preach a notable fine homily on the necessity of marrying with sufficient provision, to all of which the young poet had not a word of reply; but sat in a very desperate unhappiness, fully convinced every hope of gaining his dear mistress was at an end.

"I tell thee what it is, friend Will," said John Hathaway, after regarding his companion's doleful visage till he found he could no longer disguise the sly pleasure he was himself enjoying all the time, "Keep thy heart above thy girdle, I prythee. I and thy honest father settled the matter yester-eve, over a full tankard. Thou shalt be married at Lammas, and shalt lack nothing for thy particular comfort I can procure thee. A fair good night to thee, son Will." Before the delighted lover could recover from his exceeding astonishment at this

welcome intelligence, his intended father-in-law, mayhap the most pleased of the two, had made his way to his bed-chamber.

Every hour of the intervening time went most joyfully with the youthful Shakspeare. Even the musty parchments and dull law writings took a pleasant countenance at this period, and he laboured so diligently and so much to the satisfaction of his master, with whom he had become in famous esteem for his cleverness at his duties, that he, hearing of his coming marriage, promised him a week's holidays previous to his wedding-day, that he might the better employ himself in the necessary preparations, and a week after his nuptials, that he might have sufficient space to enjoy himself to his heart's content. But the little lawyer was a marvellous shrewd person. He suspected did he not get rid of his clerk at such a time, he would be marring of every thing he put his hand to, by thinking of other matters.

The week previous to the wedding had arrived, and the young lover was in such a state of happy expectation as lovers at such a time only can know. His cheerful free humour had made him an especial favourite of the young men of his own age, who could claim with him any sort of acquaintance, and now more than ever his heart was open to every appearance of sociality. His approaching marriage became known over the town, and this led many

to ask him to partake with him a friendly draught that they might wish him all manner of happiness, the which he could not without an unbecoming discourtesy refuse, consequently, when he was not in company with his dear mistress, of whom by reason of her being in almost constant occupation preparing for this great festival of her life, he saw only for a brief space each day, he was engaged in social reveling with his friends. Perchance some of these, being of an idle turn, and of somewhat unbridled inclinations, were not the very properest companions he should have chosen, but he knew of nought to their particular disadvantages, and their exceeding friendliness towards him, in his present humour made him readily embrace any frolic they wished him to share in. They proposed that to make the wedding feast the more perfect, they should go together over night and kill a deer, and as this was regarded by persons of his condition at that period as a mere customary youthful frolic, he readily promised to be of the party.

It chanced to happen that afternoon, as they were standing together at the inn door, who should come by but Oliver Dumps the constable, having as his prisoners no less important personages than Sir Nathaniel, the curate, and Stripes, the school-master. The cause of which was, that these two had become such inveterate offenders in the way of drunkenness, and Oliver was so desirous of shewing

himself the queen's proper officer, that he had at last come to the determination of putting them both in the stocks; and to the stocks, which lay convenient to the inn in the market-place, the constable was bringing them, making the dolefullest lamentation by the way, of the horrid wickedness of the world that had forced him so to exercise his authority. It was amusing enough of all conscience to the throng of children and idlers that so novel an incident had brought together, to note the manner in which the two offenders bore themselves as they were carried along. The schoolmaster hung his head as if he felt a little ashamed of his situation, but the curate assumed an air of dignity so monstrously ridiculous, none could look on it in any seriousness. Presently the board was opened, their legs placed in the holes, and having had it fastened down on them with a strong padlock, they were left to their own reflections.

Sir Nathaniel seated on a low stool, with his fat legs stuck fast in the board, seemed not at all comfortable; and Stripes, hanging of his head, with his thin shanks dangling through the holes, looked amazing sheepish. The curate glanced feelingly at the schoolmaster, and the schoolmaster turned a similar look of suffering at the curate.

"Hard lying—ey, Ticklebreech?" exclaimed Sir Nathaniel, in a low voice.

"Monstrous!" replied Stripes, in as sad a tone

as ever was heard. It was evident the curate was not well pleased with his seat, for he turned on one side and then on the other, and then supported himself with his hands behind, with a visage as woeful as drunken man ever wore.

"I would these pestilent stocks had been a thousand miles away, and be hanged to 'em!" cried the uncomfortable Sir Nathaniel, with an earnestness that bespoke his sincerity.

"I'faith so would I, an' it please your reverence!" answered the pedagogue, with more than ordinary fervour. As the minutes passed neither appeared to grow a whit more satisfied with his situation. The crimson face of the one every moment took a deeper hue, and the lanthorn jaws of the other assumed an increasing elongation.

"Too much drinking's a villainous bad thing, Pedagogus!" said the curate, with a notable emphasis that shewed how convinced he was of the truth of his assertion.

"Horrible!" replied Stripes, evidently in a like assurance.

"I marvel a man should be so huge an ass as to be ever addling his brains with abominable filthy liquor," continued his companion. "For mine own part, I would such vile stuff was put clean out o' the land. I hate it. But 'tis all the fault of those base, thorough-going rogues of tapsters, who seduce ones innocence; and then, when the draughts

have become in any number, straightway take to asking for payment. What infamous villainy!"

"Marvellous, o' my word!" exclaimed the other.

"Well, an' they catch me drinking any more of their abominable potations, I'll turn hermit," observed Sir Nathaniel, in a greater earnestness. "'Sprecious! there is no honesty in swallowing anything of the sort. Ale is against all Christian doctrine, and wine is scarce fit for a Jew. Not a drop of such deceitful base wash shall pollute my throat. Wilt taste any more on't, Ticklebreech?"

"Never! an' it please your reverence," cried the schoolmaster, monstrous determinedly. The whole of this little scene of reformation had been heard and witnessed by the youthful Shakspeare and his companions, to their exceeding amusement; and soon after, one of the former came before the toppers, carrying of an ale-can frothing over at the top.

"Thinking thou cannot help being terribly athirst sitting there so uncomfortably, I have brought thee a draught of right good liquor," said he, very carefully laying down the can within a short distance of them, and then returning to his companions.

"I thank thee, boy—I thank thee; my tongue cleaveth to my mouth, I am so dry," replied the curate, eagerly stretching out his arm towards the vessel; but it was beyond his reach: thereupon he earnestly moved his companion to bring it him: and Stripes, manifestly no less eagerly, stretched out

his whole length of limb, but could only get within an inch of it.

“Now, Pedagogus!” cried his companion, pushing the other with all his might over the stocks, “prythee send thy hand a little farther. Stretch away, Ticklebreech! Thou hast it within a hair’s breadth; now give it a fair grasp and ’tis ours.” But it was all labour in vain; Stripes stretched and Sir Nathaniel pushed with equal desire; but all their united exertions only succeeded in bringing the schoolmaster’s fingers to touch the tantalising ale-can; and at last, Stripes roared out he could endure no more squeezing, for his body was pressed against the edge of the board with a force that threatened to cut him in two. Whilst both were lamenting the hardness of their fortune, up came another of the young men, and pushed the can a little nearer and went his way. The schoolmaster in a moment had it in his careful hold, but the other greedily snatched it out of his hand, claiming the first draught as due to his superiority, and quickly raised it to his lips. He had not swallowed more than a mouthful or two when he dashed down the can, spluttered out what he was swallowing, and made one of the most dissatisfied countenances ever seen, to the exceeding astonishment of his companion and the infinite delight of the spectators. The can, instead of “right good liquor,” contained nothing better than a mess of soap-suds, fetched by

the merry knave who offered it, from a tub in which the maids of the inn were washing the household linen.

Whilst the enraged curate was making of all manner of strange forbidding grimaces, and abusing those who had put so unpalatable a jest on him in most outrageous choleric terms, there rode up to him a very sedate old gentleman, with others in his company, who regarded Sir Nathaniel and his companion with a singular severe scrutiny. In consequence of continued complaints made by divers of the worthy burgesses of Stratford, concerning of the unseemly behaviour of their parson and school-master, the bishop of that diocese had determined to look into their conduct, and had arrived in the town with his retinue, where, after enquiring for the curate, he had been directed to the stocks. The result of this visit was, both Sir Nathaniel and Stripes were a very short time after dismissed from their offices, and driven out of the place they had so long disgraced by their presence.

The moon was shining clearly in the starry sky, when William Shakspeare, armed with John Hathaway's gun, and accompanied by three or four of his associates to help to carry the game, crept cautiously through the shrubberies that skirted the park, where he knew deer in plenty were to be found. Hitherto all his shooting had been directed against small birds and coney, but now he looked for nobler spoil. Having

made a long circuit to avoid being noticed, he came to a grove of thick trees—his companions keeping a little behind him—where, after he had advanced stealthily along for about a hundred yards, he beheld a goodly company of fallow deer, some lying, some standing, and most of them cropping the herbage at the edge of the grove, where the open pasture sweeps up to the trees. Taking the wind in his face, the young deer-stealer crept from tree to tree, pausing behind each to mark if the game was disturbed, then proceeding noiselessly in the same direction. He never remembered having felt such excitement—he could scarce breathe he was so moved. He had singled out the tallest buck of the herd, that stood like a sentinel, a little nigher to him than the rest, seeming to sniff the air, and stamping with his foot as if he suspected some danger, and knew not whence it was coming. William Shakspeare crouched behind the trunk of a neighbouring tree, as still as a stone, afraid that the very beating of his heart would betray him. His companions laid themselves down in the grass as soon as they caught sight of the deer. He peeped from behind his hiding place, and beheld the buck quietly cropping the herbage with his back towards him. He then looked at his gun, and saw every thing was as it should be. His great anxiety now was to reach an old decayed stump—the ruin of what had once been the finest of the whole grove—which lay between him and his

game. He issued from his hiding place as if his life depended on the quietness of his footsteps, and to his wondrous satisfaction succeeded in gaining the desired place without being discovered. Yet it was manifest the buck was in some way alarmed, for the young deer-stealer had scarce concealed himself when he turned sharply round, looking now in this direction and now in that, and stamping with more violence than before. The stump was completely open from the direction in which the youthful Shakspeare approached it; and inside were seats all round, for it was so large it would accommodate many; just under the bench a hole had been gnawed or broken away, and to this he cautiously raised his head as he lay his full length on the ground; then lifted he the barrel of his gun, and as the deer was glancing suspiciously in the direction of his concealment, he took a fair aim at his open breast and fired. The whole herd disappeared in a moment.

"Bravo, Will!" cried one of his companions, hastily running up to the spot, "thou hast killed the delicatest bit of venison I have seen this many a day."

Sure enough, the buck lay at a little distance from where he stood awhile since, shot through the heart. Overjoyed at their success, they bound his four legs together, intending to carry him away on a long thick staff they had brought with them.

"Run! Will, run! Here be the keepers!" all

at once shouted another of them; and on the instant, as if they had wings to their legs, every one ran in different directions. The young Shakspeare caught up his gun to follow their example, without loss of time, but he found himself in the grasp of two stout fellows, with whom he soon saw it was useless struggling. These were the two sons of Sampson, the gamekeeper, who, with their father, had been watching from behind the trees the whole scene; and not caring to pursue the others, they pounced upon the unlucky deer-stealer in the very act of committing his offence. Sampson carried the slain deer and the gun, and his sons bore their prisoner to the lodge at Daisy Hill. They abused him somewhat at first, but he managed to gain on their good will as they proceeded; and when they arrived at the place where they intended confining him till they could take him before the justice at a proper hour in the morning, the father ordered a tankard of ale to refresh himself withal.

Who should bring it in but his fair acquaintance, Kate, the gamekeeper's pretty neice, whom he had met many times since he first had sight of her when she waited on him at Sir Thomas Lucy's. She was famously surprised, I doubt not, at beholding him there, and more so when she learned what occasion brought him; but she had the wit not so much as to recognise him before her uncle and cousins. As for the culprit, as he believed his punishment would

be but trifling, the offence was generally considered so slight, he took the matter very pleasantly, and so amused his captors by his merry jests and his excellent famous singing, that they ordered jug after jug of ale, and sung their songs and made their jests, and swore he was the drollest knave they ever came anigh. Each of these men drank without stint, and Kate seemed to take care they should have as much as they could fancy: but their prisoner sipped sparingly, and the result was, in two or three hours after his capture, Sampson and his two sons were snoring in their chairs, and their prisoner was conveyed out of the chamber by his kind confederate.

I doubt though she would have shewn him any such good service had she known he was to be married that very day, for she gave him no lack of signs she was more than ordinary fond of him. What passed between them the few minutes she detained him in the kitchen, hath never been correctly ascertained, therefore I cannot describe it to the courteous reader; but at the last moment of it she helped him to put the slain deer, there lying, to hang by his gun, over his shoulder; then she opened the door for him—and then he made the best of his way homewards.

CHAPTER XII.

Your master is to be married to-day ?
Else all this rosemary is lost.

MIDDLETON.

Come strew apace. Lord ! shall I never live
To walke to church on flowers ? O 'tis fine
To see a bride trip it to church so lightly,
As if her new choppines would scorn to brush
A silly flower.

BARRY.

A parliament member, a justice of peace,
At home a poor scarecrowe, in London an asse.

SHAKSPEARE.

Off my painted honour !
Whilst with vain hopes our faculties we tire,
We seem to sweat in ice, and freeze in fire.

WEBSTER.

“ O’ my Christian conscience, the monstrousness of this world passeth belief ! ” exclaimed Oliver Dumps, in his miserablest manner, as he flung himself into a seat in the chimney corner of the widow Pippins’s comfortable kitchen—a place he seemed more partial to than any other in all Stratford.

“ Why, what’s i’ the wind now, master constable ? ” enquired the laughing widow, as she brought her visitor his customary tankard, dressed more gaily than she had been seen for many years.

The melancholy Dumps looked up to her jolly features and sighed heavily; took a draught of the tankard, and sighed again. "'Tis a villainous world, that's the truth on't," said he, shaking his head very woefully.

"Villainous fiddlestick?" replied his merry companion. "By my fackings, the world be a right pleasant world, and is as full of delectable jests as world can be."

"Only think of young Will Shakspeare taking to deer stealing," observed the constable, gravely.

"Who? Will Shakspeare!" cried the widow, with a look of exceeding astonishment.

"Taken by the keepers in the very fact," replied Oliver Dumps. "Conveyed by them to the lodge at Daisy Hill, for the night. Made his escape in a most unaccountable manner, carrying off the deer he had slain, and the gun he had done it with. Sir Thomas Lucy hath issued a warrant for his apprehension, I have it to execute on him without delay; and hearing he is at John Hathaway's cottage, about to be married, am going there to carry him before his worship."

"Tilly vally! thou art jesting, master constable," exclaimed the other, "Will Shakspeare is not like to do any thing of the sort, I will be bound for it."

The queen's proper officer looked into his pouch, took out a folded piece of paper, and gave into her hands.

“That’s the warrant,” said he.

“An honest neighbour, that is now in my parlour, shall read it to me, seeing I cannot read a word of it myself,” answered the widow Pippins; “and as I am going to John Hathaway’s as soon as I have got on my hat and muffler, if thou wilt wait a brief while, we will walk together.” The constable promised to wait any reasonable time, for in truth he was well pleased to have her company, he, as many shrewdly imagined, having long been seeking to be her sixth husband; and thereupon the widow went to get the warrant explained to her.

A short time before this took place, a procession moved from the yeoman’s cottage, in the direction of the church, which, methinks, deserveth here to be set down. First rode an old churl, blowing of such a peal on his bagpipes as if he was determined to expend his wind as quickly as he could, his long pipes and his cap decked with rosemary—then followed a merry company of lusty lads and bold bachelors of the neighbourhood, two and two, in their holiday jerkins, every one clean trussed, with a blue buckram bride lace upon a branch of rosemary, upon his left arm, on horses of all sorts and colours; William Shakspeare, the bridegroom, riding at their head in a new suit of frolic green, gaily decked with ribbons, with a branch of rosemary at his cap, and a true love posey at his breast; and on each side rode a bridesman, in tawny worsted jackets, straw

hats on their heads with a steeple crown, and harvest gloves on their hands, similarly appointed with ribbons, rosemary, and posies. All the way he went, the bridegroom pulled off his cap courteously to the spectators, who, seeing so gallant a youth, could not help loudly greeting him with their good wishes.

Then came a company of Morris-dancers on foot, jingling it very prettily, with a most moving accompaniment of pipe and tabor. After them, six fair maidens in fair white court-pies and orange tawny kirtles, garlanded with wreaths of wheat, finely gilded, on their heads, and casting of flowers, by handfuls, out of small wicker baskets, gaily decked for the occasion. Then came the two bridemaids, most daintily tired, carrying before them each a large spice cake, followed by the bride's brother, a fair boy, carrying himself very bravely, choicely apparelled, bearing the parcel-gilt bride-cup, full of sweet ippocras, with a goodly branch of rosemary gilded and hung about with ribbons of all colours streaming in the wind; next came Anne Hathaway, the blushing blooming bride—her appareling of appropriate whiteness, rarely garnished with ribbons and flowers, her hair curiously combed and plaited, and crowned with a garland of white roses—answering very gracefully the hearty salutations of her neighbours. On each side of her walked a fair boy, with bride laces and rosemary tied about his silken sleeves. After these, several musicians, with flutes, sackbuts, and

other delicate instruments, made excellent music. Then rode the father of the bride, between the father and mother of the bridegroom, in their holiday garments, with no lack of proper garnishing; and, lastly, came the friends invited to the bride-ale, also wearing of their best suits, decorated with bride laces and rosemary.

In this order they reached the church at a slow pace, where the priest soon did his office for them; the bride-cup was then emptied by the company to the health and happiness of the new-married folks; and they returned in much the same fashion as they went, save that the bride rode on a pillion behind the bridegroom. John Hathaway's dwelling would scarce hold the guests; but they managed to accommodate themselves pretty well, for every room was thrown open, filled with a most bountiful provision of things for convenience and honest cheer, beside which there lay the orchard, the paddock, and the garden, for any that chose out of door pastime. The revels that followed exceed description—all sorts of games were going on in every direction—here a blind harper singing of ballads to a well-pleased audience, of all ages—there sundry young people, sitting in a circle with one in the midst, playing at hunt the slipper—another set at barley break—a third at a dance—the old, the young, the middle-aged, maidens and bachelors, husbands, wives, widows, and widowers, striving all

they could to enjoy the pleasant humour of the hour.

Among the company were many of the courteous reader's old acquaintances; for in the principal chamber were Master Alderman Malmsey, and his neighbour Master Alderman Dowlas, like marvellous proper husbands as they were, attending on their still comely good-humoured wives—there was the widow Pippins, with a famous laughing countenance, that seemed to savour of a jest—there was honest John Shakspeare and his matronly sweet wife, looking such satisfaction as 'tis impossible to describe—there was the manly yeoman, going about with his sly pleasantry, more manifest than ever, as he looked to see all were enjoying themselves to their heart's content—there was the blooming bride, and there the gallant bridegroom, in exquisite content with themselves and the whole world; and with these were also a many others, whose names I have forgotten. Still one more requireth my notice, and he was no other than Oliver Dumps, who sat in a corner, looking monstrous miserable, though each of the prettiest women was ever coming up to him with ~~in~~ manner of delicacies, pressing him to partake of them, and smiling on him as she smiled on no one else in the room. But the ~~more~~ good cheer he made the more miserable he looked. In fact, he was not at all at his ease. He wished to prove himself the queen's proper officer, without

favour of any person, and yet he liked not interrupting the mirth of so bountiful a company.

It appeared as if there was some conspiracy among the women—doubtless set on by the merry widow, who seemed very busy amongst them, whispering, laughing, and pointing to the constable—for they would not allow him to remain by himself a moment, and kept insisting so winningly on his drinking the delicious draughts they brought, that he found he could do nothing, save, with a pitiful sighing, the performing of their requests. At last, with a sudden great effort, he broke from a circle of them, and gravely walked up to the bridegroom. To the marvel of the greater number of the guests, he claimed William Shakspeare as his prisoner, and commanded him to accompany him on the instant to his worship the justice.

“Eh ! what dost say ?” exclaimed John Hathaway, advancing hurriedly, with divers others, there present, to know the meaning of such strange behaviour.

“Deer stealing !” hiccuped the constable, evidently with his senses somewhat confused by the many draughts of strong wine he had been forced to swallow, yet holding himself up with what he considered to be the true dignity of the queen’s proper officer.

“Nay, it cannot be, worthy Master Dumps,” said Mistress Malmsey, coaxingly, on one side of him.

" 'Tis a mistake, depend on't, sweet sir," added Mistress Dowlas, in an equally insinuating manner.

" Don't believe in anything of the sort, good Oliver," said one of the buxom bridemaids, pulling him affectionately by the arm.

" 'Tis impossible so sensible a person as you are can give ear to so incredible a story," said another, taking a like pretty liberty with his other elbow. Oliver Dumps heard all these seducing expressions, and glanced from one to the other of the bewitching aspects of the speakers, with a monstrous struggling in his breast, and then with a becoming gravity, as he thought, took a paper from his pouch.

" Here's the warrant," answered he. John Hathaway received the paper from him, unfolded it, and commenced, in an exceeding droll manner, reading a ballad there printed, which was famous popular at the time, beginning—

" Alas, my love! you do me wrong,
To cast me off discourteously;
And I have loved you so long,
Delighting in your company.

Greensleeves was all my joy,
Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was my hart of gold,
And who but Lady Greensleeves?"

Oliver Dumps looked quite confounded, for he saw the jest that the merry widow had played upon him. The laughing and joking of those around

him he took as pleasantly as he could, which in sooth was rather of a miserable sort—for he liked not confessing how he had been tricked; and the end of it was, the queen's proper officer allowed himself to join in the festivity of the day, as regardless of warrants and justices, as though he intended to play the constable no more. However, the affair of the deer-stealing went not off so quietly. Sir Thomas Lucy when he heard of it was in a terrible rage, and when he found the offender was not brought before him, he waxed more wroth than before. Other warrants were issued, and other constables employed, and the next morning the young deer-stealer was dragged into the justice-room, followed by such of his friends who had gained knowledge of his capture. The news, however, soon spread, and occasioned a notable commotion.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of Jemmy Catchpole when he beheld his clerk brought before him in custody on such a charge; but being a shrewd man, he did not so much as recognize him. The justice entered into the charge with much the same formalities as had been exhibited by him and his attendants on a previous occasion—abusing of the prisoner with great bitterness, and allowing of none to say a word in his defence. The evidence of the keepers proved the offence beyond all contradiction, and when Sir Thomas demanded of the

offender to give up the names of all those who were participating with him in the offence, and the latter would not tell the name of so much as one person, the justice broke out in such a passion, there never was the like. This the prisoner endured with a composure which exasperated the other the more, as it seemed so like holding him in contempt, and setting his authority at naught. He threatened him with the pillory, the whipping-post, and even the gibbet, but still William Shakspeare was not to be got to betray his companions. He smiled at the threats, and, with a fearless aspect, confessed he alone had committed the offence, and that he was ready to receive the punishment.

The constables, keepers, and serving men, looked awe-struck at what they considered to be the prisoner's horrible impudency, in so behaving before so great a man as his worship; and the poor justice seemed scarce in his right senses, he spoke so fast, and in so tearing a passion—at last, swearing it was a great pity he could not hang so abominable a villain, he got from the little lawyer the fullest punishment, provided by the statute of Elizabeth for such offences, which was the infliction of a fine, treble the value of the venison, an imprisonment for three months in the county gaol, and security for good behaviour for seven years; to the which he presently sentenced the offender. The youthful Shakspeare cared only for the imprisoning part of

his sentence, as he felt it hard to be separated from his wife, and he scarce married to her; but he could not allow himself to say anything in mitigation of punishment, although his father and father-in-law did so for him; and the latter offered to pay the fine, and the two aldermen, his father's old friends, came forward as his security; nevertheless, his worship, so far from according with what was required, abused the parties heartily for saying ought of the matter, and bade them out of his doors straight, or they should all to prison together.

There where few persons who heard of the sentence, but were famously indignant a mere youthful frolic should meet with such heavy punishment, and many of the prisoner's companions swore he should never to prison if they could prevent it. Never had there been such a ferment in Stratford before. All abused Sir Thomas Lucy for his unwarrantable behaviour, and unreasonable severity and both men and women took it as monstrous so young a couple should be thrust asunder for so trifling a cause. For all this the youthful Shakspeare, gyved like a felon, and guarded by two constables, was sent off to Warwick jail. No one seemed in any way surprised when intelligence was br~~ait~~ited abroad that they had scarce got a mile from Charlcote, when the constables were set upon and soundly cudgelled, and the prisoner carried off in triumph, by sundry unknown persons with

blackened faces. Certes, such was the case. The young husband had been rescued by divers of his companions, relieved of his fetters, and brought back to his distressed wife.

It is not to be expected that a young man of any spirit would sit down and tamely suffer the insults that had been heaped upon him by this shallow pated justice. William Shakspeare had committed the offence it is true. He never denied it, and was ready to endure any fitting punishment; but the abuse and the gyves were the gratuitous insolence of power, desirous of insulting the weak; and, smarting under a sense of wrong, the young poet penned a bitter ballad against the old knight, and a mad-cap companion fixed it on the justices's park gates. Sir Thomas was one of the first that spied it; and the excessive rage it put him into, was as ludicrous a thing as can be conceived. He grew pale and red in a breath—stormed till he was hoarse, and called about him his little army of constables, game-keepers, and serving-men, questioned them as to who had dared to commit so unparalleled an indignity, and abused the horror-struck varlets all round because none could give him the slightest information on the subject. This ballad which among other offensive things, bore a burthen to it with a play upon his name, by no means the delicatest piece of jesting in the world, coming so quickly after the drubbing of his officers, to one of

so tender a skin in such matters, seemed like enough to throw him into a fever.

His dignity, however, was fated to get still harder rubs. He issued warrant after warrant for the apprehension of the escaped deer-stealer. in a perfect phrenzy of passion to hear he was still at large; and sent constables with them in all directions, with strict orders to carry him to prison dead or alive; but flung himself in such desperate rages when he heard the fruitlessness of their travail, that the poor constables cared not to go near him. Oliver Dumps had received a significant hint from the merry widow, that if ever he laid a hand on Will Shakspeare she would have none of him for a sixth husband, therefore, it cannot be in any way strange he never could find the escaped prisoner searched he ever so. As for the other constables, one had incautiously made known his errand, and boasted at the blacksmith's that he would find Will Shakspeare before the day was over; and about an hour afterwards the unhappy officer found himself dragged through the horse-pond, with an intimation when allowed to get away half drowned, that if caught again under similar circumstances, he would not escape without hanging. This together with the intemperate behaviour of the justice, operated with wonderful effect upon the whole body, and they unanimously adopted the opinion the offender had left the country.

Some time after these occurrences his worship gained intelligence that young Shakspeare had been all the while residing at the cottage of his father-in-law, and moreover that he was the very infamous base caitiff who had penned the bitter ballad that had been stuck upon his gates. This was adding fuel to the flame. The justice was in such a monstrous fire of indignation that he hardly knew what to set about. The unlucky constables were ordered to attend him instantly, and upon these he poured out the violent rage that was brimming over in him. They declared their conviction the escaped prisoner had gone from those parts altogether—nay, one confidently asserted a brother of his had seen him in London selling oysters, and another was as ready to swear he had been met with by a cousin of his on a pie-bald horse within a mile or so of Oxford. His worship was puzzled, and the more puzzled his worship appeared, the more confident did the constables become in their assertions. At last he ordered them to accompany him, and then started off in the midst of them, on the road to the yeoman's cottage.

William Shakspeare was busily engaged with a party of farm labourers in putting up a hay-rick in his father-in-law's paddock, when one of the children came running in all haste to say his worship was approaching the house with a great company

of men—in an instant he was covered up in the hay as snugly as possible, and his companions, carelessly singing, continued their work lifting up the new hay to the top of the rick and there spreading it smooth and even. Presently the expected party made their appearance. Sir Thomas, in a terrible anxiety to find the culprit, and the constables quite as anxious he should not be found.

“Dost know anything of one William Shakspeare, fellow?” enquired the knight authoritatively, of a freckled-faced knave, lame of a leg. The latter gazed with open mouth for a few moments at his interrogator, and then turning round to his next neighbour, very gravely repeated the question—his fellow looked up very hard, and then looked down very hard, and then addressed another of his companions with the same question—and thus it went round the whole six of them with exactly the same result. His worship was horribly inclined to break out into a deadly passion.

“Wounds, I ha’ got un!” exclaimed he of the freckled face, slapping his knee very sharply with his palm. “His worship, no doubt, wants the blind piper that lives down yonder below the mill.”

“I’ll warrant, so he do,” added another, with a like gravity.

“I tell thee no! I tell thee no!” bawled out the justice, as the haymakers were shouting their information into his ears, as if each was striving to

be heard above the other ; " I want no such person. I seek one William Shakspeare, a convicted deer-stealer, who married John Hathaway's daughter."

At this the lame one cast an exceeding long face, rubbed his knuckles against his eyes, and turned away very pitifully; and the others did just the same.

" What hath become of him, I say?" cried the knight, more imperatively, not exactly knowing what to make of these demonstrations.

" An' it please your worship," cried freckled face, blubbering as if his heart was a breaking, " no man can help it. I would he had lived longer, perchance he might have been all the older for it."

" Is he dead indeed, now fellow?" enquired the old knight, looking somewhat confounded at this unexpected news.

" An' it please you, I heard he made so fine an end, it was better than a sermon at fast days," observed another, as woeful as his companion.

" Who's that laughing?" exclaimed Sir Thomas, very sharply; " there's some one behind the rick. Bring him here ! Body o' me, I'll teach the unmannerly knave better behaviour." The constables hurried behind the rick, but not the slightest sign of any one was there. This put his worship into a rage. He had certainly heard somebody, and felt a monstrous inclination to punish a person guilty of treating him with so little respect. One

of the men thought it was an owl, another took it to be a bat, and a third assured his worship it was only the old sow, who, on an occasion, could grunt in a way marvellous like unto laughing. The justice did not appear to be perfectly satisfied with these explanations; but, after questioning the men some short time longer, and getting from them no greater intelligence, he found himself forced to turn away no wiser than he came. Threatening them all with the terriblest punishments, if he discovered they had told him falsely, the old knight retraced his steps, resolving to see his intelligencer again, and examine him strictly on the correctness of his information, of the which he now entertained some doubts.

“Take heed of the dog, an’ it please your worship,” cried one of the hay-makers, doubtless with most benevolent intentions; but unfortunately, he gave the caution a moment too late, for as the justice was picking his way carefully along, a dog rushed out of a kennel close upon him, and gave him so smart a bite in the leg, that he roared again. The youthful Shakspeare peeped from his hiding place at hearing this noise, and had the satisfaction of seeing the old knight hopping along the yard at the top of his speed, furiously pursued by a flock of noisy geese and turkeys, who seemed quite as much inclined for a bite of his legs as the dog had been. His little army did not make their retreat in a

much more orderly manner, for the house-dog flew at them as they passed his kennel, and the turkeys and geese pursued them when they crossed the yard. His worship was more hurt by the shouts of laughter which followed his undignified exit, than he had been by the bite he had received, but oh more unpalatable than all!—as he was returning home in a most horrible humour, what should he hear, but a parcel of little children singing the offensive ballad writ upon him, as loud as they could bawl it. His wrath was too great for utterance. He felt he could have hanged every little rogue of them all; but resolved to go to town, and complain to the privy council how infamously he had been used.

After well abusing the constables, and every one else that came within his reach, he sought the unhappy Mabel, and poured out the remainder of his rage upon her; swearing she should marry his friend's servant and no other, and bidding her prepare herself for doing so within a month at least, as he was determined it should then take place. The poor foundling too well knew the character of her companion to attempt to parley with him on the subject. It was manifest her villainous persecutors would not let her rest whilst there remained the slightest chance of their getting her into their power; and having the positive and unsuspecting knight, and his most obedient lady to assist them,

they fully persuaded themselves their success was certain. The only bar seemed to lie in the disinclination of her affianced husband to be an agent in the business ; but at last, the bribes he was offered appeared to stifle his conscience, and he promised to carry on the matter to its conclusion.

CHAPTER XIII.

Not a word spake he more than was nede,
 And that was said in forme and reverence,
 And short and quike, and full of high sentence.
 Souning in moral vertue was his speche,
 And gladly wold he learn, and gladly teche.

CHAUCER.

There is no man
 Whose wisdom can
 Reforme a wyfull wyffe,
 But only God,
 Who made the rod,
 For our unthryfty life,

OLD SONG.

Kath. What our destinies
 Have ruled out in their books we must not search,
 But kneel to.
War. Then to fear when hope is fruitless,
 Were to be desperately miserable ;
 Which poverty our greatness does not dream of,
 And, much more, scorns to stoop to ; some few minutes
 Remain yet, let's be thrifty in our hopes.

FORD.

TIME passed on, and in due time the young husband was made a father. This occurrence gave his feelings a new impulse. A youth of nineteen, possessed of such deep sympathies, and so ready to indulge them on all natural objects as was the youthful Shakspeare, on such an occasion must needs experience a most choice and exquisite grati-

fication. He felt he had got a stronger claim on his exertions than had he hitherto, and laboured with higher aims than he had before known. Jemmy Catchpole, much as he inclined to do so, knowing of his worth, did not dare employ him; and when he was not assisting his father-in-law in farming, his chief occupation was teaching the sons of the neighbouring farmers and yeomen such matters of schooling as it was customary for them to learn; and this he did so tenderly, and in so scholarlike a manner, that by the parents he soon got to be approved of before all teachers. During this time he failed not to continue his own studies in such fashion as he had been used to; and it was acknowledged, of every person of his acquaintance, that, for learning, they had never met with his peer.

Yet, all this while, he was far from being happy. The ardour of his passion for the yeoman's blooming daughter had blinded him to many faults he could not avoid perceiving in her on closer acquaintance. She had been spoiled by indulgence all her life. Her father had allowed her to do much as she pleased, which had put into her the notion that what she did must always be right and she would not have it gainsayed of any.

The youthful Shakspeare discovered too late, his wife's deficiencies in the necessary qualities of mind. Indeed she was perfectly uneducated, and her ignorance made her unconscious of the mischief she was

doing by her ungracious conduct. She was not naturally of an unamiable disposition; indeed, at times she was too prodigal in the display of her kinder feelings, but vanity had filled her with most preposterous prejudices; and if her husband opposed her, however slightly, in any matter, however reasonable on his part, she would regard it as using her exceeding ill, and get out of temper speedily, and say uncivil words, and shew all manner of discourteous behaviour. This made her youthful help-mate see into her character more and more, and the more he saw the less he liked, and the less he liked the less he respected. The charm of her beauty gradually vanished away; and as she had nothing in her conversation to attract him, she had no sort of hold over him beyond that of being the mother of his child. Still he treated her as affectionately as ever he had done, considering himself the most to blame for his too great precipitancy, allowing her no just cause of complaint—and striving whatever he could to bring her, by fair persuasions, to a more admirable way of behaving.

Every day he beheld stronger proofs of a vain disposition acting upon a weak mind. Fits of salliness followed close upon the heels of outbreaks of temper—she neglected the proper duties of a wife and a mother, to enjoy any pastime that was within her reach—and by the lack of ordinary comfort to be had at home, she frequently drove her

husband to seek his pleasure where he could. It was a grief that touched him where he could have little or no defence; for when he attempted to remonstrate, in order that he might fail in nothing to induce her to act more commendably, it was sure to end in such a scene of obstinacy, wounded self-love, and unamiable behaving, as plainly shewed him there were marvellous slight hopes she would mend.

Again he became a father. On the first occasion his child was a girl, that he had had christened by the name of Susanna, and now his wife brought him twins, a boy and a girl, that were severally named Hamnet and Judith. For a time this made him regardless of the mother's deficiencies, and increased his kindnesses to her: besides which, he entertained many anxious thoughts of the future. His own means were in no way adequate to his wants, and although John Hathaway took heed of these, so that he should feel them but lightly, he would rather, by many degrees, have satisfied them of his own labour. His old companions, Greene, Burbage, Condell, and Hemings, had one by one gone to join the players; and such reports of their well-doing had reached him, as made him marvellous desirous of following their example.

Unfortunately, his wife merely regarded this late increase in her family as a vast accession to her claims to have her will in every thing that was most

preposterous; and more than ever was inclined to behave herself as she pleased, and resent, in every possible way, any attempt to thwart her inclinations. Consequently she daily made greater demands on her husband's patience, which sometimes forced from him well-meant arguments, the which she took very bitterly: and he finding her to grow so much the worse, so much the more he strove by kindness to make her better, at last made her to know he would leave her, did she not seek to lead him a pleasanter life. But this was far from making her alter her ungraciousness towards him, for she appeared to take it as if she would as soon he went as staid. Still the young husband was reluctant to give her up. He would have been glad to have had any friend's advice, for he saw nought before him but an increasing wretchedness, remained he where he was; and to quit her and the children, although he was well aware her father would properly provide for them, he could not reconcile his conscience to; but he had no friend at this time fit to advise with him in such a strait. His friends at Sir Marmaduke's he had not seen some time, for as he grew to manhood he felt he could not associate with persons so far above him as he had done whilst a boy, and went there less and less, till he refrained from such visits altogether; and he liked not going to John a Combe, remembering how urgently he had warned him against

pursuing the very course of which he was now feeling the evil consequences.

After many long and comfortless reflections, he resolved on making a last effort. One fine May morning, a few months after the christening of the twins, he presented himself before her. They were alone. She was tiring of herself in all her choicest braveries, to attend some festival in the neighbourhood. A sort of sprightly indifference was in her manner as she saw her husband approach; as he noticed this, and heard one of the children crying unheeded, in the next chamber, he had no great hope of success in his present undertaking—nevertheless he felt it to be his duty to proceed in it. He walked up and down the chamber with an aching heart, she humming of a tune the while, and decking herself in her finery as if in a perfect carelessness of every thing save her own pleasure.

“Anne, I pray you look to the child, it cryeth most pitifully!” exclaimed he at last.

“Joan is there,” replied she, carelessly.

“It seemeth that it requireth its mother, and will not be satisfied with Joan,” observed her husband.

“Then it *must* be satisfied with her, for I cannot be ever with the children,” answered his wife, with some pettishness.

“Methinks the gratifying the natural desires of a young babe, should be held before all other things with its mother,” said William Shakspeare. “She

hath a sacred obligation imposed on her which she ought in no way to neglect for the furthering of her own immediate convenience."

"Tut! what should men know of such matters!" cried his companion. "Truly, a fine life of it a poor woman would lead who followed such old saws. I will do no such folly, depend on't. I marvel you should interfere in things so out of your province; but 'tis done merely to prevent my taking my proper pleasure—nevertheless it seemeth to me good I enjoy it."

"I cannot have the slightest wish to debar you of your proper pleasures," replied her husband; "in very truth I would strive my utmost you should enjoy as much happiness as woman can." ●

"You don't!" exclaimed the other, sharply; "you are in a constant mood of finding fault with me—you will never do as I wish: and when I am for the pleasuring myself with my neighbours, you fail not to raise all manner of foolish improper objections."

"I cannot call any such proper pleasures, when your neighbours are looked to and your children neglected," observed he. "

"Marry, I care not what you call them," she answered; "I will do as I list, take it as you may."

"Anne, I implore you to pause in this most unseemly behaving," said her companion, very urgently; "it doth cause me infinite unhappiness

to see you so forget yourself. The ordinary duties of a fond good wife and mother are thrust aside and lost sight of, through utter carelessness. None could furnish my house so pleasantly as yourself, if it chose you to do so ; but you seek to make it as wretched as you can by all manner of unbecomingness, unkindness, and neglect. I pray you change such a course for one more desirable to me and more creditable to yourself; and you shall find I do not lack gratitude."

"Gratitude!" echoed the spoiled woman, with considerable bitterness. "O' my word I have had enough of your gratitude. I have left divers rich suitors to take up with you, who had not so much as would buy me a day's meal. I have brought you every comfort you have in the way of lodging, clothing, and victual; and moreover, three as fine children as an honest father could desire; and yet I am treated as though I had done nothing of all this. 'Tis a fine thing, truly, to treat one so ill who hath been so bountiful to you; but I will put up with no such treatment, I promise you. I will act as it seemeth best to my humour; and in no case will I be driven from my innocent pastime at the will of an ungrateful worthless husband."

"I have already told you I strive not to check you in anything innocent at a proper time," replied her husband; "but I cannot see you ruin your own

happiness and mine by a wilful obstinacy in doing wrong."

"You're a base inhuman wretch!" exclaimed the yeoman's daughter.

"I have sought all occasions and all arguments to persuade you to act more becomingly," continued he, "and only brought on myself bitter taunts and ungenerous reflections."

"I wish I had never seen your face, you ungrateful vile caitiff!" added his companion.

"There now remaineth but one thing for me to do," said William Shakspeare, betraying by his voice the struggle in his nature; "as 'tis impossible we can live happily together, we must part!"

"Oh, you may go!" replied she, with a careless toss of her head; "and I care not how soon—and I shall not fret for your coming back, I promise you."

"I beseech you, as my last request, shew such love to the dear children as their tender years entitle them to," said the youthful father, so moved he could scarce speak.

"I pray you dispatch yourself, since you are for going," answered the thoughtless wife more bitterly than before; "and forget not to take with you all that you brought!" Her husband cast one look of reproach on the once object of his so great love—turned away almost choking with his overpowering

sensations, and in the next moment had left the cottage,—the scene of a thousand exquisite pleasures—never to enter it again. He first bent his steps towards Henley Street, to take leave of his parents, and then left the town without speech of any other, for with his present feelings he cared not to be idly talked to and questioned. When he had gone some little distance he stopped to take a last look of his native place. There lay the steeple of the old church, towering above the surrounding houses and trees—the fair land-mark he had hailed returning from so many pleasant rambles; there lay his father's dwelling, hallowed in his recollection by a whole history of early studies, struggles, and pleasures; there lay the winding Avon, in whose sweet waters he had so often laved his limbs, or gathered from its banks continual store of blooming treasure; and there lay a hundred other spots equally well deserving of his remembrance, as the scene of some childish sport or youthful adventure.

He gazed in another direction, and if the yeoman's pretty cottage was not made out in the landscape, he had it in his eyes as clearly as when he first beheld it, attracted thereto by the cheerful singing of the blooming girl at her spinning-wheel. Then followed scene after scene of exquisite enjoyment. The evening meetings, where she waited for him at the next stile—their delicious salutations there—their gentle stroll together back to the old walnut

tree, and all the goodly entertainment he had under its friendly shadows, till, after some dozen reluctant farewells, he forced himself away. And last of all came sullen looks and provoking words, and a crowd of attendant miseries, created by the unfeeling thoughtless carelessness of that weak vain woman. And now he saw himself a wanderer—to go where-soever he would, driven from his home by the very means that had brought such home to him, and deprived of happiness by having had the possession of what he had so long believed could alone secure it him for ever. These remembrances took such painful hold of his heart, that the anguish he endured at that moment was beyond every thing he had hitherto suffered.

“Thou shalt see better days anon, dear heart!” exclaimed a familiar voice, and turning round, he beheld nurse Cicely. “Pleaure cometh after suffering as naturally as the green buds after the early rains. All things have their season. Thy time is now for sorrow; but bear up nobly, and be assured greatness shall come of it beyond thy brightest hopes. A fair journey to thee, my sweeting!”—So saying, the old woman hobbled away, leaving the youthful Shakspeare in an especial marvel at her strange words. She had often addressed him in a like manner previously, but he had paid little attention to what she said,—now, however, he pondered on it as he went along, and not without some

particular satisfaction. He had not proceeded a quarter of a mile when he met John a Combe. He would have avoided him if he could, for he liked not his company at that moment; but the usurer came suddenly upon him from a lane which led into the road, along which William Shakspeare was passing.

"So!" cried John a Combe, in his usual bitter manner, "thou wouldst not be led by my advice, and art now smarting for't. Serves thee right. But every fool doth the same. Tell them where lies the mischief, they run into it on the instant,—suffer first and repent after. Prythee, what dost intend doing?"

"I am for making the best of my way to London, where I expect meeting with certain friends of mine," replied his young companion.

"Ay, boy, thou'lt meet fools enough there, I'll warrant," answered the usurer sharply. "But 'tis a long journey, and requireth some expense on the way. How art off for means?"

"In truth, not over well—but I must e'en do as I best may," said the other.

"Give me thy purse!" exclaimed John a Combe, and without more ado, he snatched it from his girdle, and then turned his back to him to see what was in it. "As I live, no more than a groat and a shilling!" continued he, in seeming monstrous astonishment. "Why, ere thou hast got a good dozen

mile thou wilt be forced to eat thyself for lack of victual. Here, let me put thy purse in thy girdle again." And then the usurer carefully replaced it. "Thou and thy wits have parted company, that's a sure thing."

"I would ask one favour of you, good Master Combe, before I leave you."

"Nay, I will lend thee no money!" quickly replied his companion. "It be not a likely thing a usurer should trust one who starteth on a long journey, with only a knobbed stick by way of weapon, with a bundle of linen at the end on't, carried over his shoulder by way of luggage, and a shove-groat shilling, and a cracked groat in his purse, for store of money for spending."

"I do not require of you such a thing," replied William Shakspeare. "All I would of you is, that if my dear parents need what you have to spare, you will do your good offices to them, and as soon as fortune favoureth me somewhat, I will return whatever you are so generous as to furnish."

"Truly, a fine story!" remarked John a Combe. "Thou art sure to come to great wealth with so prodigal a beginning! It would be monstrous like an usurer, methinks, to lend on such poor security."

"An' you will not I cannot help it," said the other dejectedly.

"Nay, I said not I refused!" exclaimed the usurer. "So there is no great occasion thou

shouldst look so woe-be-gone. Indeed, I care not to acquaint thee, for thy comfort sseeing thou art not like to come back and tell my neighbours of my infinite foolishness, I have been thy honest father's friend this many a year, and he not know it." His young companion seized his hand gratefully, and looked more thanks than he could have spoke had he twenty tongues. He knew that some secret person had for a considerable period of years been sending sums of money when his parents were in their greatest need, and now it came out it was Master Combe and no other.

"I cannot get out of my old folly, try how I will," continued he, more moved by the other's simple manifestation of his feelings than he chose to shew. "Of the baseness of the world, methinks I have had proof enough. 'O' my life! there cannot be found more convincing evidence than an honest worthy man suffering poverty in mean clothing and poor victual, whilst baseness in a fine doublet, taketh sauce with his capon, and hath money to spare."

"Doubtless the world containeth some unworthy persons," observed William Shakspeare. "It is scarce reasonable to expect it can be otherwise, when such countless multitudes are to be met with in each part of the globe. We shall find weeds in every field; but surely the field deserveth to be called a good field for all that. But why should we dwell on such things? There are flowers,

peeping out from our very footsteps go where we will, and yet we will not see them, but care only to spy what is unsightly or unprofitable. In honest truth, worthy sir, methinks we do Nature a huge wrong by such behaviour of ours. 'Tis manifest injustice to be so blind to merit, and to see only that which is not like to call for our admiration."

"Nay, boy, 'tis the world that is blind to merit not I," answered the usurer. "I behold thy honest parents struggling all they can to live with a fair credit though terribly pinched i' the ribs, and the world shutteth its Argus eyes and passeth by. I behold their worthy son shewing signs of an honourable disposition, and talents deserving of as high estimation, yet the world doth appreciate him at so low a price, it will allow of his starting a long journey to London on a chance errand to fortune, with no greater provision than a shilling and a groat. All this while the world giveth to villains place and ceremony, and maketh a shallow-witted coxcomb with broad acres pass for a knight o' the shire, and justice o' the peace."

"But how know we this state of things will always continue?" said his young companion; "It may be, for such changes have happened before, that when Master Justice is feeding of the worms, my dear parents shall be enjoying of as much comfort as their hearts can desire; and I, whom he hath so often strove to play his poor spite upon,

may leave to my children a better name out of such poor talents as I have, than could he, out of all his broad acres and fine house, serving-men and constables, his worship and knightship, and every other sign of greatness whereof he is used to make such famous boasting, into the bargain."

"See I this, I will believe it," said John a Combe; "yet, with the knowledge I have of the world's baseness, I expect no such welcome changes. Justice is painted blind, and blind she is beyond question."

"I have other thoughts of that," replied William Shakspeare. "I believe that it very rarely happens, when merit sheweth itself in any conspicuousness, it is not kindly taken by the hand to be exalted above all meaner natures."

"Ay, boy, on the pillory or the gibbet," drily added the usurer; "but thou art past arguing. Just as I was at thy age art thou. I would allow none to convince me of any such thing as injustice in nature. Marry, I had such convincing at last, as left me without a doubt to stand upon. I would have thee grow wiser than thou art, but in mercy I would not wish thee any such resistless arguments as crushed my favourable opinions out of me. Get thee gone, Will Shakspeare, and speed on thy errand as well as thou canst. If so be thou art not doing well, write to me without fail; but, at any rate, let me know how thou art proceeding."

"One thing more, worthy Master Combe," said his young companion urgently; "Since you have been so good as to talk of writing, I would you would do me such kind service as to see my children as oft as may be convenient to you, and let me know how get they on in all things."

"And their mother?" added the usurer, with somewhat of sarcasm.

"If you know anything concerning of her worthy to be told, acquaint me with it by all means; but if of another nature, I care not to hear of it."

"Ha!" exclaimed the usurer, sharply; "let it be even so. And now fare-thee-well, Will Shakspeare. I wish thee every manner of good, though I am in huge doubt anything of the sort is to be found."

"Truly, I cannot help seeing it in yourself, worthy Master Combe, despite of your ungracious seeming," replied his young friend, parting with him in sincere regret. After going a few paces, he turned round to take another glance at his old acquaintance, and to his surprise, beheld him standing still, looking after him with an aspect of deeper feeling than ever he had observed in him before; but immediately he was noticed, he took on himself the same severe expression of countenance he was wont to wear, and then turning quickly away, paced onwards towards the town.

As William Shakspeare was thinking over the

strangeness of his companion, his eyes suddenly lighted on his purse, which, seeming to be much increased in size since he last had sight of it, he took into his hand, and looking to its contents, to his prodigious marvelling, discovered as goodly a store of coin as he could need the whole length of his journey. Here was a fresh instance of the unhappy usurer's secret manner of doing kindness where it was most needed, and the discovery of it had such effect on the sensitive nature of him he had so providently thought of, that it refreshed him with many sweet feelings, and sent him on his long journey with a more cheerful spirit than he had known a long time. He appeared now to have at his will the means of procuring what he most wished. For, with such a sanguine disposition as he possessed, he believed that were he once in London, he should speedily get such employment as he desired, and then he had in him that conviction he would raise himself greatly, often attending upon the youthful and imaginative.

Filled with these considerations, and with manifold fine plans and excellent fair prospects, he trudged manfully along.

The day was as well-favoured a day to look on as ever appeared in that merry month; the hedges being all over covered with delicate May, and the banks as prodigally gifted with the dainty gifts of the season, which made the air so exquisite, nothing

could exceed it in delectable sweetness; added to which, such crowds of small birds were tuning of their little pipes upon every tree and bush, as made most ravishing music all along the road. I doubt much the delightful aspect of Nature was as pleasantly regarded as it deserved to be by the youthful wanderer; for although he had but a few minutes since determined in his mind he would think no more of his unhappiness, the sight of the odorous flowery hedges brought to his memory that gay morning he went a-maying with his then so deeply loved Anne Hathaway, and the unutterable gladness he enjoyed because of her sharing with him the excellent brave pastimes of that memorable day.

Whilst he was so deeply engaged with such thinking, he did not notice he had a companion, evidently striving to keep up with him, whom he had just passed. This person appeared to be, by his dress, a young boy of some gentle family; for he was clad very neatly in a suit of fine broad cloth, of a gay orange-tawney colour, with good kersey hose, shoes with roses, a well appointed hat and feather on his head, and a light stick or staff in his hand. In person he was of an exceeding elegant shape, indeed such delicate symmetry of limbs is rarely to be met with; and in features he was of a fair handsomeness, yet of a complexion so wan and sickly, it looked as though he was fitter to be in his

bed than to be a traveller, for ever so short a distance. He looked fatigued, and it was manifest he could ill keep up with the manly strides of the youthful Shakspeare.

"I pray you, sweet sir, walk not so fast, for I should be wondrous glad of your honest company."

The other turned round somewhat surprised, not knowing any one was so nigh him, and was moved with extreme pity at the slight glance he took of the pallid suffering countenance of the young stranger. He lessened his pace on the instant.

"Go you far on this road, my young master?" enquired he courteously.

"Truly, I know not," replied his companion, in a manner somewhat hesitating; "but the farther I get from the place I have left, the more pleased I shall be."

"Yet you seem in no way fit to go on a journey," observed William Shakspeare, in some marvel at what he had just heard. "I doubt you are strong enough for much walking."

"I have been in a great sickness a long time, sweet sir," replied the other; "but as I recovered, I found such villainy approaching me, that I thought it better to trust to the chance of perishing on a strange road than remaining where I was." At hearing this his companion marvelled the more.

"Keep a good heart, I pray you!" exclaimed the youthful Shakspeare, ready at a moment to

sympathize with any unhappy person. "If it please you to let me bear you company, I will take such heed of you, you shall come to no hurt. But to what place are you bound?"

"To any, where I can live in proper honesty," replied the young stranger. "I will willingly essay my strength in such humble manner of living as I can get, with no higher end than the keeping me a worthy name."

William Shakspeare said nothing, but he thought in his mind his fellow-traveller had but a poor chance of a living, relied he only on his strength, and resolved at least, that, as he wanted a friend, a friend he should have. With the true delicacy of a noble mind, he refrained from asking him any questions which might seem to come of over curiousness, but began to talk cheerfully to him, telling him to hope for better times, and entertaining him with such pleasant discourse as he had at his commandment. And so these two proceeded together. The one in the full strength of early manhood, and, though bereft of his happiness, full of health and hope—the other, apparently in the fresh dawning of youth, and in as little comfort of body as of mind.

Methinks this chapter in no case ought to be brought to a conclusion, without requiring of the courteous reader especial notice of a matter therein treated; which, it is to be hoped, will be to his singular profit. In the developement of this my story,

there hath been made manifest how that kind of love, which is merely ideal, endeth in a complete nothingness, as far as its object is concerned, it being only a fair herald of a more natural passion; but in these later pages it is shewn, that the affection which cometh but of the delight taken by the senses in personal comeliness, must meet with a still more unsatisfactory conclusion. It is true that Nature hath planted in the human heart a capacity for enjoying the beautiful, and a desire to obtain its possession; and the affections of the individual, like unto clear waters, do most perfectly bear in them the resemblance of whatsoever shape appeareth to them in most perfectness; but it should ever be borne in mind, that there are beauties of far sweeter and lasting value, than such as are wont to lie on the surface of things, and that these constitute the sole proper source of their admirableness. The flowers, the stars, and every form of matter, animate or inanimate, impressed with that configuration most pleasing to the sight, possess qualities which make them the love of the poet and the true philosophic sort of persons, exceedingly more so than their mere appearance. They exhibit signs of intelligence, by which they are known to be parts of the universal good; and for the worth they shew are worthily appreciated.

Such should it be with things that more intimately appertain to humanity. The agreeable face

and graceful person are the unprofitablest of objects, unless they carry with them the fairer signs of mind and feeling. They may be regarded as such fruit as come of plants imperfectly cultivated, that look tempting to the eye, but are intolerable to the taste; and save the pretty sort of way in which they do garnish their boughs, are of no goodness whatsoever. In this same goodness—which is nought else but another name for intelligence—lieth the real source and conclusion of all honest love. This is it that sows the seed—this is it that obtains infinite crops of exquisite sweet fruit. Where there is no moral excellence, there can never be any moral advantage. The youthful Shakspeare, therefore, in shewing, as he did, a total indifference to aught else save the personal charms of the blooming daughter of John Hathaway, brought on himself the positive evil which proceedeth from insufficiency of good. But thus are the marvellous lessons of Nature taught, and how oft are they placed before us in this very fashion! The youth of both sexes, full of the delicious sympathies so newly grown within their breasts, regard in the other, symmetry of limb and loveliness of feature, as vouchers for whatsoever is properest and most desirable, and, at times, do get their several senses so intoxicated by allowing of their imaginations to be excited by the strong draughts proceeding from rosy smiling lips and lustrous enticing eyes, that they clean forget there is

ought else in the world worthy of their having. The capacity for enjoyment satiated, quick on the heels of it followeth the ordinary ending of such foolishness. The individual finds the punishment received, infinitely exceeds the pleasure obtained, and instructed by a knowledge of the error he hath committed, seeks, if it be possible in him, to husband his affections with more wisdom.

At the age of eighteen years, it is inconsistent with experience to expect the human heart to be philosophical. Before that age, William Shakspeare found his whole nature thrilled with a passion for a female eight years his senior, and consequently, in the possession of every charm of mature womanhood. He revelled in the delusive gratification of an attachment placed on no surer foundation than personal beauty, and fixing his happiness there, in due time found it levelled to the dust. The result hath rendered him a homeless adventurer, banished from his domestic hearth to seek, amongst strangers, that comfort he had lost every hope of where he believed it to be most secure. Now must he work out the penalty of his offence, and, by his example, teach a great moral lesson unto all humanity, which, perchance, shall not be altogether lost sight of at this time, or at any other.

END OF VOL. II.

7 3-
HM

JAN 17 1939

